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THE PARABLES OF JESUS

THE PARABLES OF JESUS

THEIR ART AND USE

BY

A. T. CADOUX, B.A. (CAPE), D.D. (LONDON)

AUTHOR OF

"ESSAYS IN CHRISTIAN THINKING," "JESUS AND CIVIL GOVERNMENT," AND "THE GOSPEL THAT JESUS PREACHED AND THE GOSPEL FOR TO-DAY."

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THIS BOOK
IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF
MY FRIEND
PETER MASTERTON MARTIN
TO WHOSE FAITH AND FELLOWSHIP
IT OWES
ITS OPPORTUNITY AND INCENTIVE

PREFACE

It is more than thirty years since Jülicher showed that the parables of Jesus were not allegories, but I cannot find that he or any other writer has made thorough use of the methods which must thus supersede those of the hitherto usual allegorical interpretation. Hence this book. I am told that some of its results will be called far-fetched. I can only say that I have come to them by the endeavour to apply principles that seem to me to be indicated by common sense and observed facts, and that I am not unwilling to think that when we understand the utterances of Jesus, we are likely to find his meaning astonishing rather than trite.

The parables are here given in the text of the Authorized Version with a minimum of emendations.

A. T. Cadoux.

Glasgow.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

In the recorded utterances of Jesus nothing is so peculiar, so striking or so attractive as his parables. They stand alone. Nowhere else are there attributed to anyone parables that in number and beauty can be compared with those of the first three Gospels.

The parable is unquestionably a form of art, though not one of its highest forms. And when its power in human conference is considered, it may appear strange that good parables are so rare. In any case, while it is true that in other forms of art such as drama or epic and lyric poetry, a small cluster of great souls stand together on the highest peak of achievement, no one in the art of parables stands near Jesus, and scarcely another can be named with more than one or two good parables to show.

This is connected with the nature of the parable as a work of art. It is not art in the highest form, because it is art harnessed for service and conflict.

The Parables of Jesus

The parables of Jesus are the work of an artist devoting himself to the answer of demands more humanly imperative than the call of beauty. They were his characteristic utterance because it was he who in one and the same intent called humanity to consider the lilies and himself undertook the conflict that led to the cross.

Here we find the reason why the parable is so rare. It always requires a considerable degree of art, but generally of art exercised under hard conditions. In the three typical parables of the Bible the speaker takes his life into his hands. Jotham spoke his parable of the trees to the men of Shechem and then fled for his life. Nathan with the parable of the ewe-lamb told an oriental despot of his sin. Jesus in the parable of the wicked husbandmen used his own death sentence as a weapon for his cause. Almost all the parables of Jesus, of whose occasion we are fairly sure, were spoken in attack or defence. Beside that of the wicked husbandmen we must here place those of the two sons, the house divided, the strong man, the two debtors, the real defilement, the patch and the wine-skin, the sons of the bridechamber, the good Samaritan, the lost coin and the prodigal. The parable is thus both more and less than a work of art. It is itself part of the moving life in which it had its birth and into which it thrusts its truth. Hence it loses some of

its native quality when it is employed merely as a literary device.

In its most characteristic use the parable is a weapon of controversy, not shaped like a sonnet in undisturbed concentration, but improvised in conflict to meet an unpremeditated situation. And with this handicap it has at its best a delicacy and complexity of aptitude showing a range of mind and genius of association beyond that required for the similes and metaphors of other poetic composition. In its highest use it shows the imagination and sensitiveness of the poet, the penetration, rapidity and resourcefulness of the protagonist, and the courage that allows such a mind to work unimpeded by the turmoil and danger of mortal combat.

The rarity of this art and the supremacy of Jesus' achievement in it make his parables valuable as documents, especially in view of those who contend that of Jesus himself we have no sure knowledge, but that he was merely a centre round which gathered legends and sayings embodying the beliefs and ideals of the early Church. Against this we observe that, setting the Gospels aside for a moment, we have in the New Testament what the early Church thought most worth preserving in the writings of its best minds, but, though occasions are many in which a parable would be helpful, not a single writer shows the least ability to create one.

Not one is attributed to any speaker in the book of Acts. Yet we are asked to believe that these people who could not create parables for themselves did for another the much more difficult thing of creating not only parables but imaginary historic situations into which to fit them.

The parables attributed to Jesus are thus evidence that the Church took its rise from a personality immeasurably greater than any who followed him in its ranks. And because parables are instruments of controversy which stand in closest articulation to concrete circumstance, the parables of Jesus are evidence not merely that such a one existed, but of much that was most important in his endeavour.

CHAPTER II

THE PARABLES AND THE EARLY CHURCH

ANY attempt to understand Jesus' use of parable must take account of the saying attributed to him in Mark iv. 10-12. There we read, "And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parables. And he said unto them, Unto you is given the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without all things are done (or 'happen' not 'are taught') in parables: that (possibly 'with the result that' rather than 'in order that') seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should turn and it should be forgiven them." Taken by itself this would seem to mean that those outside the kingdom are those who see only the surface of things and miss the meaning, who knew "how to interpret the face of the earth and the heaven" but knew not how to interpret that time. In the particular setting, however, in which we find the passage, it tells us that Jesus chose to speak in parables to the multitude because he knew that thus the truth would be hidden from his hearers.

But a comparison of Matthew and Luke[1] with each other and with Mark shows that they often departed from the order of material in their sources and made their own arrangement, which was often topical rather than historical. This seems to be true also of Mark, as for instance where (iii. 21, 22) he groups together three calumnies, "He is beside himself," "He hath Beelzebub" and "By the prince of the demons casteth he out demons" with the result that in the discourse that follows, we find the prince of the demons to be not Beelzebub but Satan; and we note that in Matt. (xii. 22ff.) and Luke (xi. 14f.) the third of these calumnies follows more naturally upon the cure of a demoniac, of which Mark here says nothing.

We may therefore conclude that the strange meaning given to Mark iv. 11, 12, by its present setting comes from the evangelist rather than from Jesus. We cannot think that Jesus spoke except to be understood. It is true that a parable often hides

[1] The words "Matthew," "Mark," "Luke" and "John" are here used for the Gospels and their authors, but this must not be taken as implying anything with regard to the identity of the authors of these books. The position assumed here is that which is generally taken by modern scholars, that the first Gospel, as we have it, is not the work of Matthew the publican and that, whatever may be the relation of the Fourth Gospel to the son of Zebedee, it cannot rank with the first three as evidence for the words of Jesus: that the authors of the First and Third Gospels both used the Second Gospel as one of their sources, and that they also made common use of another source (commonly designated by the letter Q) which may have been the work of Matthew the publican; also that besides Mark and Q, both the First and Third Evangelists had a source or sources of their own.

the truth until it is too late for the hearer to guard himself against it: it tells men in a story what they will not listen to in plain language, and therefore the incidence must not be clear until the end of the story is reached. But this is for the sake of getting the truth home to the hearer. That Jesus meant his parables to be understood by those who heard them is evident from the exhortations with which he commended them—"Who hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Mark iv. 9): "Hear me all of you and understand" (Mark vii. 14): "How think ye?" (Matt. xviii. 12): "I will shew you to whom he is like" (Luke vi. 47): "How shall we liken the kingdom of God, or in what parable shall we set it forth?" (Mark iv. 30, Luke xiii. 18). We are told that the authorities felt the point of the parable of the wicked husbandmen. And it is impossible to think that their hearers did not catch the sense of the parables of the rich fool, the prodigal, the publican and Pharisee.

But if the evangelist believed that the parables were spoken in order to conceal the truth, it shows that so far as he was acquainted with them he regarded them as for the most part unintelligible to an ordinary audience. This opinion finds expression in Mark iv. 34, where we are told of the parables that Jesus "privately to his disciples expounded all things," which implies that without explanation they were unintelligible even to his disciples.

Matthew and Luke both adopt this assumption. Luke viii. 10 takes over Mark iv. 10-12, modifying it so as to make its reference more explicit. Matt. xiii. 11ff. does the same, " Unto you it is given to know . . . therefore speak I to them in parables. . . ."

The contents of Matt. xiii and Mark iv are evidence that when the Gospels took their present form, there was confusion of thought with regard to the parables and their intelligibility. In Matt. xiii Jesus spoke the parable of the sower and then, evidently in private (as in Mark), interpreted it to the disciples and went on to give them the parables of the tares, the mustard seed and the leaven. But in v. 34 we are surprised to read, " All these things spake Jesus in parables unto the multitudes, and without a parable spake he nothing unto them," upon which there follows the explanation of the parable of the tares, given in private, and then, apparently also in private, the parables of the hidden treasure, the pearl of great price and the drag-net. Mark iv says that the parable of the sower was spoken to a very great multitude. Then follow the verses cited above (vs. 10-12), in which the distinction made between the disciples and " those without " implies either that the disciples understand, while the others do not, or that the parables were spoken with the intention of giving explanation to the disciples but not to the others. Yet v. 13 adds, " And he saith

unto them, know ye not this parable ? and how then will ye know all the parables ? " as if the disciples did not understand, though he had expected them to do so. So also in vv. 33, 34 we read, " With many such parables spake he the word unto them " (evidently the multitude, though the immediately preceding parables were apparently given privately to the disciples) " as they were able to hear it " (which means nothing unless it means " as they were able to understand the parables "). " But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things unto his disciples " (as though the parables had been unintelligible even to them). And of the four parables given in this chapter only one is expounded.

There is indeed reason to question whether Jesus ever interpreted his parables. Most of them have no interpretation attached, whereas, had Jesus made interpretations the regular perquisite of the disciples, they would surely have been preserved no less carefully than the parables themselves. And it is not easy to rebut the suggestion that the speaker who needs to interpret his parables is not master of his method. On the other hand, if the Church later found them unintelligible (as we have seen it did) interpretations would come to be added in the Church's teaching and some of these might easily come to be attributed to Jesus. And when the

teaching of Jesus passed from oral tradition to the written document, it must sometimes have been very difficult for the writer to distinguish between the words of Jesus and the comments of the apostles and others. For instance, it is generally now agreed that the phrase " making all meats clean " in Mark vii. 19, though long regarded as part of the utterance of Jesus, is really the comment of another mind. Other cases might be cited. Thus it comes that most modern scholars find themselves compelled to admit that some at least of the interpretations attributed to Jesus are of very questionable authenticity, though many would hesitate to say that this was true of them all.

It is generally held that if any interpretation has claim to be considered as a genuine utterance of Jesus, it is that of the sower (Mark iv. 14-20). Dr. A. H. McNeile for instance (*The Gospel according to St. Matthew*, pp. 195, 203, 204) questions the authenticity of the interpretations of the tares and the drag-net but maintains that of the sower. Yet a careful consideration will suggest that if we do not find grave difficulty even here, it is because custom has put observation to sleep. The parable as given in Mark iv. 3-8, runs :—

3 Hearken; behold, there went out a sower to sow: 4 and it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the birds came and devoured it

up. 5 And some fell on the rock, where it had not much earth; and forthwith it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: 6 and when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. 7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. 8 And others fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, some sixty and some an hundred.

And the interpretation follows:—

14 The sower soweth the word. 15 And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, forthwith cometh Satan, and taketh away the word that was sown in them. 16 And these are they likewise which are sown on the rock; who when they have heard the word, forthwith receive it with gladness; 17 and have no root in themselves, but endure only for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, forthwith they are offended. 18 And others are they which are sown among thorns; these are they which hear the word, 19 and the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. 20 And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive *it*,[1] and bring forth

[1] In the text of the parables the italics of the A.V. have been retained. They represent words for which the Greek text has no explicit equivalent.

fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty and some an hundred.

We note first a certain looseness of style in the interpretation as compared with the parable and with other indubitable utterances of Jesus. The seed, the word and the people who hear it are confused with each other—" The sower soweth the word " but " these are they which are sown on the rock, who when they have heard the word . . . " If this is due to bad reporting, why is the interpretation so much worse reported than the parable, especially since, if interpretation was needed, it was originally more intelligible than the parable ?

But the main reason against the authenticity of the interpretation is that it inverts the emphasis of the parable. The parable emphasizes success, the interpretation emphasizes the failures. The parable admits several causes of unfruitfulness but is crowned with a harvest, the manifold gain of which makes the failures insignificant. Even if, in the various possibilities of failure, a quarter of the seed had been lost —and this would have meant careless sowing—still there would have been a gain on the whole of more than fortyfold. The interpretation thus entirely ignores the bearing of the parable as a whole, and inverts its sense by throwing the whole stress upon the greatness and seriousness of the possibilities of failure. The harvest, which is the glory of the

picture, is the most insipid item of the explanation: indeed, it is the only item which is not explained: we are not told whether the bearing of fruit is in character or charitable deed or the proclamation of the sown word or in the multiplication of those who accept the word: we are only told that the seed which brings forth fruit stands for people who "bring forth fruit." [1]

We therefore see that if the interpretation of the sower is authentic, then Jesus actually did speak in parables, on this occasion at least, in order to leave the multitude in ignorance of what he really meant. For not only does the interpretation invert what the hearer would naturally take to be the emphasis of the parable, but who would guess that the feeding birds stand for the malevolence of Satan, or that the necessary sun represents persecution, or that the thorns are intended to picture the allurement of riches? The interpretation makes the parable a riddle harder than Samson's.

The guessing of the meaning would be made still harder because, as is now generally recognized, the interpretation in several ways reflects the interests and needs of a time later than the public ministry of Jesus. It speaks of a time when through persecution or worldliness the followers of Jesus were falling

[1] The original application of this parable and of others in this chapter will be discussed later.

off from what they had committed themselves to: this was the case with the early Church, but there is no evidence that Jesus' followers were persecuted during his ministry, and, while worldliness seems to have deterred some from following, it does not seem to have caused the falling off of any who had begun. What chiefly made the word of Jesus unfruitful was the opposition of scribe and Pharisee, of which the explanation says nothing.

And with these things in mind, we can hardly help seeing a peculiar significance in the words that introduce the interpretation, "Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all the parables?" Jesus is here made to speak as though there was an existing body of parables with which his disciples had not yet come into contact. We cannot attribute such an assumption to him, but the words would express exactly the position of an early oral transmitter of Jesus' teaching as he faced his audience: they would be the natural preface to the interpretation which he then tendered. They suggest that before Jesus' utterances were reduced to writing the Church was already beginning to find some at least of his parables unintelligible. At any rate they go to confirm what we saw reason to conclude, that by the time our Gospels received their present form, the Church had lost the key to understanding all but a few of them.

The Parables and the Early Church

In this connection we have to remember that many of the parables are introduced as concerning the kingdom of God, whereas after Jesus' death the term "church" supersedes that of "kingdom of God" in the thought of his followers. This change is reflected in the strange estimate of Jesus' parables given by the present position of Mark iv. 11, 12. The early Church, eager to glorify its Lord and to justify its own position, came to look on the events in which it rose as being all that Jesus intended and worked for. Consequently his rejection and crucifixion were regarded as divinely predetermined means to his achievement: it was thought that what he attempted he must have succeeded in doing, and therefore, since his people did not learn from him, he could not have taught them with any intention that they should do so; and since the parables had largely become unintelligible to the Church, it was concluded that they were purposely made unintelligible to their first hearers "that hearing, they may hear and not understand."

But there is abundant evidence that Jesus sought to win his people as a whole. His method of movement throughout the whole country culminating at Jerusalem: the number of his disciples and his saying to them, "Ye shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel": his speaking of Jerusalem as "the city of the great King" and of the Jews as

"children of the kingdom," even when they stood self-excluded: these are some of the evidences that, like all the Hebrew prophets, Jesus' message and call were for the nation. Hence it follows that parables touching the conditions of this endeavour or the opposition with which it was met would be unintelligible to those who did not think that Jesus ever tried to win the people as a whole. And we have also to consider that, judging by those parables whose circumstance we know (e.g., Nathan's parable or those of the two debtors and the two sons), it is a characteristic of the parable to get its power by closest attachment to the actual conditions of its occasion. It follows all the more that when an endeavour or controversy is forgotten or ignored, parables rooted in, and dealing with, its concrete and vital movements must grow unintelligible.

And a quite different factor co-operated to the same end. A characteristic use of the parable is to break a way for truth, new, difficult or unacceptable to its hearers. This is especially true of the parables of Jesus, as in the case of the prodigal, the unmerciful servant and the good Samaritan. And the early Church might in some cases share the difficulty with Jesus' first hearers. We should recognize also that the parable is sometimes the vehicle for affirmations so profound, or so far from the current thought of the time, as to be incapable of any other expression.

It is interesting to mark here that we have the newest psychology in the oldest parable. We are told to-day that the driving power of those who are ambitious to rule is often an unrecognized or unconscious sense of inferiority; and Jotham's parable of the trees (Judges ix. 8-15), telling how the olive and fig tree and vine refused to leave their usefulness for kingship over the other trees, but the bramble accepted, bidding them put their trust in his shadow —what is this but a parable of the inferiority complex, of the desire to rule coming from an unacknowledged inability to produce ?

It is therefore a matter rather of expectation than surprise that the early Church, putting its own interpretation upon history, and living in conditions that differed from those of its birth, lost the meaning of many of the parables of Jesus, and that the evangelists thought them for the most part unintelligible. And it is only likely that the causes that made them unintelligible would contribute to the positive misunderstanding of some of them. We have found this to be so in the case of the sower, and we shall now proceed to examine others.

The parable of the drag-net with its interpretation is given in Matt. xiii. 47-50:—

47 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a drag-net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: 48 which when it was full they drew

up on the beach, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast out the bad. 49 So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, 50 and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Dr. A. H. McNeile (*op. cit.* p. 204), reminds us that this interpretation is almost wholly "a verbatim repetition" of that of the tares, and he continues, "'The angels shall come forth' is suitable to the reapers who were sent forth into the field, but not to the fishermen who were sitting on the beach. . . . 'The furnace of fire' is suitable to the tares but not to the fish." In fact, the point of the parable is that the good fish come to the fire, while the worthless are flung out of the net back into the water to life and freedom. Those whom the kingdom claims are not so free as others: "And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But he said unto him, Let the dead bury their own dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God" (Luke ix. 59, 60).

But there is a rather more complex contact between the parable and the kingdom of God. For, like the net, Jesus' first proclamation of the kingdom drew crowds, and to the crowds Jesus applied a selective principle—"Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple"

(Luke xiv. 25ff., Mark viii. 34). It was a principle of noblesse oblige which held the good and from whose demands the others escaped to ignoble freedom.

In the next two cases the interpretation, besides fitting the parable very awkwardly, has a content which can hardly be attributed to Jesus.

In Matt. xiii. 24-30 we read:—

24 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: 25 But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. 26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. 27 So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? 28 He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? 29 But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

The interest of the story very obviously culminates in the servants' proposal to gather out the tares and in the householder's reasoned reply, but

when we turn to the interpretation given in xiii. 37-43 we find that this, the core of the story, is completely ignored. The interpretation tells us that the good people of the world and its bad people have their origin respectively in the activities of the Son of man and the devil, which implies that there were no bad people in the world until some time after the coming of the Son of man; for we must remember that the field is not the Church but the world. This is not really intelligible: it partly reflects the theory so prominent in the Fourth Gospel, that the Jews who rejected Jesus were the children of the devil, whereas in Matt. viii. 12, Jesus speaks of them, even in their exclusion, as "children of the kingdom," thereby emphasizing human freedom in a way incompatible with this interpretation.

Both Matthew and Luke give us the parable of the children in the market, and add an interpretation:

"But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you and ye have not beaten the breast. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man glutton-

ous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children. (Matt. xi. 16-19, Lk. vii. 31-35.)

We are struck at once with the contradiction between what is here said about the popularity of John and what we know to be the facts. The interpretation is based upon his unpopularity: "This generation," say, "He hath a devil." But we know that during the whole of Jesus' public ministry John was very popular. Mark opens with all Jerusalem and Judaea going to be baptized by him. In the discourse to which the parable is appended Jesus reminds his hearers of John's popularity, "What went ye out into the wilderness to see?" And at the last Passover the authorities so feared the universal reverence for John that they dared not deny his heavenly authority. This popularity seems to have waned later, for Hebrew literature retains no record of John, and it is likely enough that, in the early Palestinian persecutions of the Church, John shared the unpopularity of the community that claimed him as the forerunner of their Lord; and at such a time the Church might have assumed that John's unpopularity was older than it was. But it is practically impossible to think that Jesus accused his generation as a whole of calumniating John. It is not very much more likely that Jesus would complain of being called "a friend of publicans and sinners."

And the interpretation cannot be said to fit the parable. The parable says that Israel was like the children sitting in the market: the interpretation compares them to the others who would neither dance nor lament. The parable has two parties, the interpretation three: and to make three is to destroy the ground of the complaint, " You will do neither the one thing nor the other."

The interpretation also disregards the point of the picture, which is that the children are *sitting* in the market and complaining of the inconsistency and ill-will of their fellows who will do neither the one thing nor the other, when the fact of the matter is that in both cases they are proposing the easy part for themselves and the hard part for the others, piping and mourning for themselves, dancing and beating the bosom for the others. What this applies to will be considered later, but in the meantime the interpretation's ignoring of the point of the picture may go to complete the evidence that it comes not from Jesus, but from the mind of a later time.

It sometimes happens that the evangelists do not seem to recognize that what is before them is a parable. For instance Luke (v. 34, 35) relates the parable of the sons of the bridechamber, but does not think it a parable, for he goes on " And he spake also a parable unto them."

On the other hand Luke recognizes the parabolic nature of the saying about the two men on the road to judgment: Matthew does not. His version (v. 25f.) is as follows:—

Be favourable to thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest in time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. 26 Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

By his placing of it he tells us that he regarded it as a literal counsel of prudence or peace to the individual. But if so, would it not be far better to seek reconciliation before starting for court? And why does Jesus speak only to the man sure to lose? In Matt. xviii. 15, it is the wronged that is told to take the initiative. And the motive urged is the not very high one of keeping out of the clutches of the law. Matthew's misunderstanding of the nature of this saying is reflected in his version of it, which we may compare with Luke's (xii. 58f.):—

58 When thou art going with thine adversary to the magistrate, in the way give diligence that thou mayest be quit of him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. 59 I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.

In both versions the issue is clearly one of debt,

for both contemplate the possibility of having to pay "the uttermost farthing" or "the very last mite." The advice as given in Luke, "Give diligence to be quit of him," also has debt in view. But the injunction of Matthew, "Make haste to be favourable" (or "kindly disposed") "to thine adversary" (according to Moulton and Milligan "there is no warrant for the translation 'agree with'"), is a financial method which would be no less absurd to an ancient Semitic audience than to us to-day.

An interpretation is sometimes given not in explicit detail, but by the nature of other utterances beside which the parable is placed, as in the case of the friend at midnight (Luke xi. 5-8):—

5 And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; 6 For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? 7 And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. 8 I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.

Luke's interpretation of this parable as intended to teach importunacy in prayer is given by placing it

immediately after the Lord's prayer and immediately before the saying, " Ask, and it shall be given unto you . . . " (both of which have a different context in Matthew) and especially by attaching it to the latter with the words, " And I say unto you " (v. 9) which are not found in Matthew's version, and are very awkward so soon after the " I say unto you " of the preceding verse.

And so understood, the parable seems to contradict the more characteristic teaching of Matt. vi. 7, 8, " But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions . . . for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him," and of Mark xi. 24, " What things soever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them," which insists that we must believe that God is willing, whereas the parable suggests that he may not be. It suggests that he may be importuned into doing what goodwill alone will not bring him to. For it must be remembered that it stresses the overcoming of unwillingness—" I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity . . . "

Luke was a Gentile, and it may probably be said that Jewish reverence would not have permitted the representation of God by this churlish man ignominiously bullied out of bed by his friend's noise at the door. What the parable means we

shall enquire later, but in the meantime we may well ask if we are justified in accepting a meaning which would secure that, if such a parable were spoken to-day with such a meaning, it would be condemned as clumsy, misleading, dangerous and irreverent.

Sometimes the interpretation of a parable is given by a little editorial introduction, as in the case of the unjust judge (Luke xviii. 1ff.), "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint." But, in this case, at least, the interpretation seems unwarranted, for the parable, both by its position at the end of an apocalyptic discourse and by its closing words, "Howbeit, when the Son of man come will he find faith on the earth?" is obviously intended to give point to something in that sphere of interest rather than to teach the sort of importunity in prayer which, as we have just seen, Jesus elsewhere discountenanced. In other cases the editorial introduction adds nothing that is not explicit in the parable, as for example in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican—"And he spake also this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised the rest."

The instances which we have examined go to show that where interpretations have been appended to the parables or implied by the arrangement of

material, they give evidence of coming from some other than the author of the parable. And we shall find, as we examine others, that this conclusion has very few exceptions. In very striking contrast to this we shall find that where not only the parable, but what are evidently the circumstances of its origin, have been preserved for us, the point of the parable at once finds its incidence in the circumstance of its origin. It is kindled by the friction of life's opposites and illuminates the factors of its ignition. We shall consider here only one example of this, the parable of the wicked husbandmen, which Mark (xii. 1-9) gives as follows:—

1 And he began to speak unto them by parables. A *certain* man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about *it*, and digged *a place for* the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. 2 And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. 3 And they caught *him*, and beat him, and sent *him* away empty. 4 And again he sent unto them another servant; and him they wounded in the head, and handled shamefully. 5 And he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some. 6 Having yet one, his well-beloved son, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. 7 But those hus-

bandmen said among themselves, This is the heir, come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. 8 And they took him and killed *him*, and cast *him* out of the vineyard. 9 What shall the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.

We shall see later that, because a parable is a work of art, form is a valuable criterion of the authenticity of this or that item of its construction. Here it is still more important because the authenticity of this parable as a whole has been challenged, and it has been maintained that it is an allegory created by the early Church. No man, it is argued, would risk the life of his son as did the owner of the vineyard, since, being a wealthy man, he could not have been in extreme need of the proceeds of his vineyard: this incident, therefore, is obviously an allegory of the death of the Son of God. It is further said that the long succession of servants ill-treated and killed is no part of a natural story, but is an allegorical representation of the martyred prophets of Israel, leading up to the death of Jesus.

These objections are founded upon the contents of two verses of Mark's account. Verse 1, with its details, makes obvious reference to Isaiah's parable of the vineyard (Is. v. 1ff.) which there stands for Israel. And v. 5, "And he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some and

killing some," suggests both the wealth of the owner in his many servants and the extreme risk to which he put his son, and also looks like an allegory of the prophets' martyrdom.

But this latter verse (Mark xii. 5) is intrusive: its style is very confused and it does not harmonize with the story. The " Come let us kill him " of the next verse suggests that originally the story had as yet no killings; so does the statement that they cast his body out of the vineyard, nothing having been said as to the disposal of the other bodies. The husbandmen's calculation (in contrast to the wealth suggested in v. 5) is made on the assumption that the owner is at the end of his resources; and if this was so, his action was reasonable, for being in a foreign land and in need of the income for which he had provided, he might well have been driven to the risky expedient of sending his son.

And when we turn to Luke xx. 9-16, we find a version of the parable that has no equivalent either to Mark xii. 5 or to the details of Mark xii. 1 which connect the parable with that of Is. v., and is therefore free from the above objections:—

9 Then began he to speak to the people this parable: A man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time. 10 And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the

fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him, and sent *him* away empty. 11 And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also, and entreated *him* shamefully, and sent *him* away empty. 12 And again he sent a third: and they wounded him also, and cast *him* out. 13 Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence *him*. 14 But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. 15 So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed *him*. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them? 16 He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others.

It is sometimes said that Luke (together with Matthew) introduces into the parable an element of allegory in saying "they cast him out and killed him,"—a more exact description of Jesus' death than Mark's "killed him and cast him out," which aggravates murder by insult to the corpse. But it would also be quite in keeping with the story that the husbandmen should not want to defile with a corpse the vineyard which they hoped to possess.

In any case this and other agreements of Matthew and Luke against Mark suggest (as Wellhausen contends) that the parable was in Q. And if so, Luke gives the more faithful reproduction of this source,

for in this parable, as in that of the mustard seed, where Matthew differs from Luke, he approximates to Mark. These considerations together with the greater simplicity and self-consistency of Luke's version, suggest that in any case it is nearer than Mark's to what Jesus said, while it is also free from the objections brought against the authenticity of the parable as Mark reports it. And that we have here a genuine parable of Jesus is confirmed by Dr. McNeile's contention (*op. cit.* p. 310) that if the early Church had created an allegory of the death of Jesus, it would certainly have included a reference to the resurrection.

If we did not know the circumstances of the parable, we should have to conjecture them from its story. We should conclude that Jesus spoke in reference to the known or supposed desire of the authorities to kill him. We might also assume that the chief interest of the parable was Jesus' claim to be the last and uniquely great messenger of God, not a servant but his only son, and was at the same time an unmasking of the authorities as seeking, for this very reason, to kill him. This, of course, is the traditional interpretation, but since it supports itself largely upon those elements of Mark's version which seem to be unauthentic, it is itself open to suspicion. And we see also that if Jesus had intended this parable as a claim to Messiahship, he would have

given his opponents a handle which they would not have been slow to seize; and further the parable shows the husbandmen as killing the son just because they acknowledged him to be the son, which was precisely what the authorities did not acknowledge with regard to Jesus.

We are, however, given exact information as to the occasion of this parable. Jesus had cleansed the Temple and the next day the authorities came and asked, "By what authority doest thou these things? or who gave thee this authority to do these things?" Jesus, in reply, reduced them to confessing that they could not tell whether John's authority was from heaven or not, whereupon he declared, "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things." Now had Jesus immediately gone on to claim in parable that he was the Son of God while they were but false servants, it would have been to tell them what his authority was immediately after he had refused to do so. And we see at once that the parable had a sharper point than this: in effect it says, "You have just made the issue between us one of authority: you are trying to kill me to conserve your own authority: you thereby acknowledge, as did the plotting husbandmen, that he whom you would kill has a higher authority than yourselves." It was unanswerable: "they perceived that he spake the parable against them; and they left him and went away" (Mk. xii. 12).

CHAPTER III

THE PARABLE AND ITS POINT

The partly confessed and partly obvious inability of the evangelists to understand many of the parables has both advantage and disadvantage. On the one hand it adds confirmation to the authenticity of the parables attributed to Jesus. If they were preserved when their preservers did not understand them, then they were preserved because they had been handed down as memories concerning a highly revered and inspired teacher.

On the other hand the evangelists not only appended to some of the parables interpretations which, as we have seen, cannot be accepted as authentic, but these interpretations, so long as they were accepted as authentic, gave a wrong direction to the endeavour to understand the parables of Jesus generally. For so far as the evangelists held that the parables could not be understood without interpretation, they took them to be not parables but allegories; and as allegories they interpreted them.

It is needful therefore to consider the difference between parable and allegory, for although the terms

are often loosely used, the two things are quite distinct and in some respects opposite. Let us take a typical example of each.

In Bunyan's allegory, after Christian and Hopeful have been for some days in the dungeon of Doubting Castle, they fall to prayer, and Christian suddenly remembers that he has in his bosom a key called Promise that will open any lock in the castle, and with it they undo the three doors that stand between them and freedom.

Beside this we may set the parable of the prodigal son.

They are alike in this, that they are both stories told in the terms of one range of life for the sake of truth upon another range. The father's love persuades us of God's love: the castle and the key stand for doubt and promise. But here the likeness ends.

The story of the escape from Doubting Castle is shaped at every point upon the religious experience which it represents, and apart from which it is absurd and unintelligible. In the midst of doubts a Christian may suddenly remember the promises of God and find himself released by them; but the story of a man unexpectedly imprisoned and then after some days suddenly remembering that he has on him a key capable of opening any lock in his prisonhouse is so full of the wildest improbabilities that it would be insulting to ask anyone to believe it. Such a story

is unintelligible without an interpretation: we need to be told that the man stands for the Christian, the castle for doubt and the key for promise; then we see that it is a vivid and moving representation of a religious experience.

The parable of the prodigal presents us with a story intelligible and complete in itself. It is presented to us for judgment. Which is right, the spirit of the father or the spirit of the elder brother? No interpretation is needed: we need only to know that it was occasioned by a complaint of the Pharisee, behind which lay an assumption as to God's attitude to sinners, and at once our judgment passes over from the story to the affirmation, "Thus God receives sinners, and his children should share in the divine joy."

While the allegory only depicts, the parable always persuades. Bultmann (*Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, p. 124) is right when he says that the characteristic of parable as distinct from allegory is that by the presentation of certain material it elicits from us a judgment and prompts its transference to another, i.e., a (spiritual) situation. Hence though the story told as an allegory may be, and often is, in itself unlikely, the story told as a parable must keep so near to experience as to evoke an unhesitating judgment and to secure its transference to another field of reality.

In allegory, the story, being shaped upon a spiritual experience, has many points of contact with it—the by-path, the giant (who has fits on sunny days) the castle, the giant's wife, the key—but just because of this, you cannot argue from the one level to the other. Bunyan does not expect us to say to ourselves, "Just as an imprisoned man may be expected to find in his pocket the key of his dungeon, so the Christian may expect God's promises to release him from doubt." On the other hand, because the parable is always an argument from one level of experience to another, it follows that if the story is made less natural and convincing by elements introduced in order to increase its similarities to the other level, it loses its power to persuade: the evidence has been tampered with by an interested party. We saw in the case of the wicked husbandmen how the introduction of allegorical elements into a parable obscured its point. So that, while the allegory (which depicts without attempting to prove) touches what it signifies at as many points as possible, the normal and essential contact of the parable with that to which it is applied is in the judgment that it passes on; and the contact may be and often is confined to this alone.

Here we may note that the fable (like Jotham's or Æsop's), in which beasts and birds and things converse, and which therefore has elements of unreality

not found in the parables of Jesus, is nevertheless a special kind of parable and not an allegory, i.e., its main object is to persuade and counsel rather than to depict. Like the more ordinary parable, it asks for a judgment with the object of transferring it to another sphere. We have an interesting example in Menenius's tale of the belly and the other members as given in Coriolanus, Act I, Sc. 1. We see that it is an argument, and that the whole force of the argument depends on the material of the tale being quite independent of the situation to which it is applied—the relation of the patricians to the people. We also see the temptation to descend from parable to allegory, which in the end Menenius himself yields to, descending at the same time very effectively from argument to invective: having told his tale he appeals for judgment—

> " What do you think,
> You, the great toe of this assembly ? "

First Cit.—" I the great toe ! why the great toe ? "

Men.—" For that, being one of the lowest, basest, poorest
> Of this most wise rebellion, thou goest foremost."

The fable's endowment of the sub-human with speech may be, as here, merely for the sake of giving liveliness to real relationships, but it may also (as with Jotham and often with Æsop) be a sort of

personification akin to what is found in the beast-stories of folklore—beasts, birds, plants and things being treated as persons endowed with the special qualities of these various sub-human forms of being. In the latter case the combination of human and sub-human gives interest and often humour, but lessens the force of argument, which may be the reason why Jesus makes no use of it.

In the interpretations already considered we have seen some of the unfortunate results of regarding the parables of Jesus as allegories. But there are others.

In the case of the parable of the sower we saw that the interpretation ignores the outstanding impression of the story and converts its affirmation of success into a series of pictures the main interest of which is the danger of failure. But we also see that if it is right to take this parable as an allegory, then it is not a good allegory. We need only consider the first item: we find that on the most important point the picture and the proposed meaning contradict each other. Seed falls along the path where it cannot grow and the birds eat it: the real cause of unfruitfulness is not the birds (who put the seed to the best use that its position affords) but the fact that it falls where it must lie exposed on the surface. The interpretation given is that the devil by snatching away the word prevents growth which would otherwise take place. Then also the function of allegory

is to make us apprehend more vividly and feel more keenly the seriousness of what is being figuratively represented, as when Christian, wandering into By-path meadow, is seized by Giant Despair. But does it help us to a more serious apprehension of the devil's work in the soul to have it pictured by the birds finding their necessary food in seed that has been cast where it cannot grow ?

Another unfortunate result of regarding the parables of Jesus as allegories is that it inclines us sometimes to attribute to them a harshness that is not there. When he said, " Cast not your pearls before swine," or " It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs," the allegorical method finds him calling certain people swine and dogs; whereas all that is passed on is a judgment upon a certain situation, and, beyond what is essential to that judgment, no more is implied as to the people concerned than there is when we describe what one person does to another as " Trying it on the dog," which certainly casts no aspersion on the character of the victim.

Then, too, the characteristic use of allegory is to give striking figurative expression to propositions that are both general in character and generally accepted; consequently, if we regard the parables of Jesus as allegories, we shall tend to find in them ornamental garments for moral or religious common-

places. Thus the evangelists understand the parables to be mostly concerned with such things as the desirability of prudence, of vigilance, of persistence in prayer, of readiness in view of oncoming judgment. But it is characteristic of the parable to deal neither with the general nor with the generally accepted. Its function is to help home a resented, distasteful or, at least, difficult truth. In its most pointed use, as in Nathan's parable to David or Jesus' parable to Simon the Pharisee, it brings the hearer to self-condemnation before he sees where he is being led. And in these cases and others it adheres closely to and gets its power from a concrete and often unique historic situation; and although this may not be true of all, it is true of most of those the occasion of which we know.

It is the outstanding merit of Jülicher's great work (*Die Gleichnisreden Jesu*) that it insisted upon the difference between parable and allegory as vital to the understanding of the parables of Jesus. But though allegory, being merely representative, touches that which it represents at many points, while the parable's essential function is to evoke a judgment in one field and secure its application in another, it does not therefore follow that there is only one point of contact between the story of the parable and the other field to which we carry the judgment evoked by the story. Indeed, it is comparatively seldom

that it is so. The judgment elicited by the story is generally a judgment upon a more or less complex situation, and there is always a certain contact between the people and things of this situation and those of the situation to which the judgment is carried. In Nathan's parable there is obviously a certain connection between the rich man and David, the poor man and Uriah, the ewe-lamb and Bathsheba. And further than this, so long as the story of the parable is not unnaturally shaped into similarity with the features of the field to which it is applied, so long as the points of similarity grow naturally from the story, they may be multiplied with advantage, for then they assist the passage of judgment from the one field to the other. This is clearly so in the case of the prodigal, where many things in the father and in the prodigal and in the elder brother are very suggestive of things in God, the sinner and the Pharisee, and where these similarities, because they do not spoil the naturalness and inward consistency of the story, make the transference of our judgment from it to the relations of God and man all the more emphatic and all the richer in content.

The resolution to find only one point of comparison between the parable and that to which it is applied has two unfortunate results. The judgment for which the parable asks is likely to be sought for

in one element of it only and is thus unduly simplified; and all other elements of the parable are regarded as *mise en scène*. Hence the parable becomes a figuratively enjoined platitude obscured by unnecessary ornament. An illustration of this is Jülicher's treatment of "If the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? . . ." (*op. cit.* II, 71). He refuses to see any point in the power of salt to impart taste and insists that the one point of comparison is the contrast between the value of good salt and the worthlessness of salt that has lost its savour. "To be called salt, but to be so no more—to be called disciples but to be so no more, two equally hopeless conditions! If instead of salt it had been coal, the parable would have been as striking."

A parable is the work of a poor artist if the picture or story is a collection of items out of which we have to pick one and discard the rest. A good parable is an organic whole in which each part is vital to the rest; it is the story of a complex and sometimes unique situation or event, so told that the outstanding features of the story contribute to the indication and nature of its point.

But, because Jülicher and his followers have not taken full advantage of the position which they have established, their treatment of the parables suffers from a serious defect common to the allegorizing

method which they have dethroned. Both generally ignore what would seem to be the simplest and surest conclusion of common sense, that in the point of the story as a story we may expect to find the point of its application. The allegorizing interpreter misses it, because he dissolves the unity of the story into a number of separate items: and his critics tend to miss it, because they look on the parable as intended to enforce one single general principle, instead of finding in it an answer to the problem of concrete circumstance. Yet is it possible to question that the intent of the parable is to be sought in the point of its story? A modern analogy to the parables of Jesus has been found in the stories of Abraham Lincoln[1]; but no one would dream of treating the stories of Lincoln as badly as the parables of Jesus are treated.

For instance, Lincoln once told the story of a farmer in Illinois who imported a hog from Europe, and told his two boys on no account to let it out of its sty. They disobeyed, and it chased them, one up a tree and the other round it. The latter could save himself from attack in the rear only by seizing the hog's tail, and round and round the tree they went until, the boy's strength beginning to give out, he shouted to his brother, "I say, John, come down quick and help me let this hog go."

[1] G. A. Buttrick, *The Parables of Jesus*, p. vii.

Now it would be an insult to the intelligence of Lincoln and his audience to suggest that he told this story to inculcate the desirability of obedience. Even if the report had not gone on, " Now, governor, that is exactly my case. I wish someone would come and help me let this hog go," we should not doubt that it was for the sake of this that the story was told. When therefore, we read the parable of the pounds and see clearly that the interest of the story culminates in the peculiar nature of the slothful servant's excuse and of his master's reply, why are we satisfied to say that the parable was intended merely to teach responsibility? If that was the intention of the parable, then the story would have been better without the conversation that now forms its culmination.[1]

From these considerations we may get guidance in our attempt to understand the parables of Jesus. Where we have reliable indication of the parable's occasion we have to ask:—

(1) What is the natural point of the picture or story?

(2) What is the outstanding interest of the occasion?

(3) What does the point of the story persuade us to think about the outstanding interest of the occasion?

[1] For a discussion of the application of this parable see p. 105 ff.

As we have already seen, in practically every case in which we have reasonable assurance that we know the occasion of a parable (e.g., Jotham's and Nathan's parables, and the parable of the house divided, the strong man armed, the two debtors, the good Samaritan, the prodigal, the two sons, the wicked husbandmen), we find that the natural point of the story lays immediate hold upon the peculiar circumstances of its occasion.

Where we are without reliable information as to the circumstances in which the parable was told, we should first see what is the point of the story, and then consider to what in the recorded experience of Jesus it is applicable. This method is not so haphazard as may appear at first sight: in any case, the only and commonly employed alternative—to seek for what is most commonplace in the story and regard it as inculcating a commonplace of morals or religion—is more certain only in being more certainly wrong. And the risk of mistake will seem smaller when we consider that the concrete uniqueness of the point of the story leaves us without great choice as to the occasions of its applicability. In the parables of Jesus just named, it is hard in every case to think of another circumstance of his life to which that particular parable would apply. It is reasonable also to think that Jesus would not use parables when plain speech would serve as well, so that they would belong

to occasions of controversy and difficulty, which would be very likely to leave other traces; and this too is confirmed by the parables cited above.

We should therefore expect the parables to find their application in the concrete conditions of Jesus' work, in his endeavour to win acceptance for a conception of the kingdom of God that was new and likely to be distasteful to his people, in the controversies in which his work and his ways involved him, in the vindication of his ways to his followers and others, and generally in any aspects of his endeavour or truth that could not well be put into immediate speech.

Another consideration is of some importance. The parable elicits a judgment in one sphere in order to transfer it to another. Therefore in an effective parable the hearer passes judgment unhesitatingly on the situation depicted in the story. When there is hesitation or misgiving, either the parable is a poor one, or we are seeking to use it as a ground for some judgment other than that which it was created to elicit. Evidence that Jesus had this caution in mind may be found in the parable of the leaven: it was essential to his purpose that the quantity of meal should be large, but if he had mentioned a quantity larger than his hearers had ever known to be baked in one baking, they might have doubted whether the leaven would work through it all.

Three measures would be a large but by no means unheard of baking.

The grounds on which the judgment elicited in one field is transferred to the other are usually taken for granted, and unless this is so the parable loses something of its power. What is good or reasonable in social intercourse may be taken to be good or reasonable in the spiritual: what is true of life on one level is likely to be true of it on another. So that behind the parable lies a faith in the essential oneness of all life, physical and spiritual, and of all goodness, human and divine.

The degree of the force of the argument varies. It may be " How much more ! " Or it may be that the parable is the thin end of truth's wedge, gaining consideration for what would otherwise be rejected at sight. A special and notable use of the parable is to induce the hearer to a true judgment in a matter in which he is biassed (especially self-biassed) by getting him to give a verdict on a similar case, the connection of which with his own he does not at first see, as in the cases of David and Simon the Pharisee.

In the discussions of this chapter we have had chiefly in mind the typical parables of Jesus, such as the prodigal, the wicked husbandmen, the sower, the two debtors. But the parables of Jesus are not all quite of the same sort, and this must be taken into account in the application of our conclusions.

Some, like the parables of the rich fool and the Pharisee and publican are stories of a human situation universalized by the elimination of the unessential. And the parable shades off into proverb-like sayings, such as "They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." We have also metaphors like, "Let your loins be girded about and your lamps burning"; and sometimes, as in the passage begun by the words just cited (Luke xii. 35-38) and in Luke xiii. 24-27, there is a persistence in metaphor that borders on allegory but never quite reaches it; and it may be noted that here Jesus is describing rather than reasoning.

Among the shorter sayings of Jesus there are probably some (though proof of this is very meagre) that were current as proverbs. If so, it is likely that in his use of them the point would be in a special application: this is generally so when a great and fresh mind uses an old saw. It is therefore in the way in which it is applied that we must find the significance, and this will not be easy, for the transmitters will be inclined to apply it in their own way. The application therefore that befits the peculiarities of his situation is most likely to be genuine.

It may perhaps be thought that the methods suggested here will diminish the value of the parables, but the reverse is true. The allegorical method of interpreting the parable adds little or nothing to what

Jesus elsewhere puts in plain language, but seen in their relation to concrete occasion the parables have something to add to our knowledge of the mind of Jesus. They gain in value when we see them, not as pictorial renderings of accepted truths, but as moments in the creative reaction of Jesus upon the life around him. They take us into the brunt of his warfare.

CHAPTER IV

FORM AS A CRITERION OF AUTHENTICITY

BECAUSE the parable is a work of art, we have a criterion of authenticity when we find two different versions of the same parable. The story that is better as a story, more convincing and self-consistent, will probably be nearer to what Jesus actually said.

We may apply this to the two versions of the parable of the supper. Matt. (xxii. 2-14) has:—

2 The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son. 3 And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. 4 Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and *my* fatlings *are* killed, and all things *are* ready: come unto the marriage. 5 But they made light of *it*, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: 6 And the remnant took his servants, and entreated *them* spitefully, and slew *them*. 7 But the king was wroth, and sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. 8 Then saith

he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. 9 Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. 10 So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. 11 And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: 12 And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. 13 Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and cast *him* into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 14 For many are called, but few *are* chosen.

In Luke xiv. 15-23 we read:—

15 And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed *is* he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. 16 Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: 17 And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. 18 And they all with one *consent* began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. 19 And another said, I have

bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. 20 And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. 21 So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the blind, and the lame. 22 And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. 23 And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel *them* to come in, that my house may be filled. 24 For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

The liveliness of Luke's account of the guests' excuses is more likely to be original than Matthew's duller version, direct speech being characteristic of Jesus' parables.

But to Matthew's two excuses Luke adds a third, " I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come." This addition introduces an unlikely element. When the man first accepted the invitation, he must have already been married or known that he would be married when the time of the feast came. The insertion is probably a reflection of the attitude towards marriage given in 1 Cor. vii. 32, 33, " He that is unmarried careth for the things of the

Lord, how he may please the Lord: but he that is married careth for the things of the world, how he may please his wife." But though Paul no doubt had justification for writing so, there is no reason why being married should prevent a man from going out to supper.

In both the accounts of the way in which guests were ultimately recruited an obtrusive element makes itself obvious. Matthew's "good and bad" does not fit the story, but seems rather to come from what he takes to be the meaning. Luke has two separate recruitings against Matthew's one, for which he is often charged with having added, in the interests of the Gentile mission, a second sending in which those outside the city are called. But this is not so, for Matthew's only sending, like Luke's second, is "into the highways," i.e., outside the city. What Luke has evidently done is to insert a first sending for "the poor and the maimed and the blind and the lame" so as to bring the parable into line with the injunction which immediately precedes it—"When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind" (Luke xiv. 13). But this damages the parable, for it suggests that these should have been invited in the first instance, and that the host was partly to blame for his disappointment with the originally invited guests. Matthew is therefore here more authentic: there was but one

recruiting, to those in the highways, i.e., outside the city; the revulsion of the host from his unworthy acquaintance to those who are not even fellow-citizens is natural.

And what Matthew adds in vv. 6 and 7 also seems unauthentic. As a part of a story it is highly unlikely that servants sent on such an errand should be murdered by their master's invited guests. And the subsequent destruction of these guests diverts attention from the main trend of the story and makes their missing of the feast irrelevant. Verse 7 also implies that the king burns his only city. It seems fairly clear that violence is here done to the story in order to introduce a reference to the Jewish persecution of the early Church and to the burning of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

We may also be fairly sure that the wedding garment incident of Matthew's version was not part of the original parable, for it confuses and divides the interest. And we see that this incident by demanding a kingly host adds an element detrimental to the rest of the story, for it is very unlikely that an invitation to a royal wedding would meet with such discourtesy. Matt. xxii. 2 and 11-13 make a story complete in itself, and it looks as though this was originally an independent parable and that the evangelist conflated it with the parable of the

supper.[1] This would explain why, in the wedding garment incident, we hear of "servants" but in the rest of the parable of "slaves." The conflation was probably motived by the desire to show that entrance into the kingdom was not without personal qualification, and it connects itself with the "good and bad" of v. 10 and with the moral of v. 14, "For many are called, but few chosen," which is not very apt since only one is ejected.

We have finally to note that "weeping and gnashing of teeth" is a favourite refrain of the First Evangelist (viii. 12, xiii. 50, xxiv. 51, xxv. 30)[2].

We have also two variant versions of the same parable given as the parable of the talents in Matthew and as that of the pounds in Luke, whose version (xix. 11-27) is as follows:—

11 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. 12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. 13 And he called ten of his servants, and delivered them ten pounds and said unto them, Occupy till I come. 14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a message

[1] So E. Klostermann, *Das Matthäus-evangelium*, p. 174.
[2] For the application of this and other parables of this chapter vide infra.

after him, saying, We will not have this *man* to reign over us. 15 And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. 16 Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. 17 And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. 18 And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. 19 And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. 20 And another came, saying, Lord, behold, *here is* thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: 21 For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. 22 And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, *thou* wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: 23 Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required it with usury? 24 And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give *it* to him that hath ten pounds. 25 (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) 26 For I say unto you, That

unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. 27 But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay *them* before me.

In Matthew's version (xxv. 14-30) there are only three servants who receive respectively five talents, two talents and one. In the number of servants Matthew is to be preferred, as only three appear in the action of the story: Luke probably makes it ten as more fitting to a prince. But Matthew's large amounts appear less authentic: five talents, or more than half the man's capital, was not a small matter either absolutely or relatively, yet he says "Thou hast been faithful over a few things." This modification of Matthew's is explicable when we see that he regarded the parable as applicable to the disciples between Jesus' death and return: the trust must be shown to be a great one. We note here that in Matthew, the faithful servants say, "I have gained," while in Luke it is the more modest, "Thy pound hath gained"; and Matthew's "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" is more fitting to the last judgment than to a domestic story.

Luke's version differs from Matthew's in making the man a nobleman who goes to receive a kingdom, and to this is attached the episode of the citizens who sent to repudiate him and of his vengeance on them.

Jülicher (*op. cit.* II. 488) hints that, had it been part of the original story, the first act of the returning king would have been vengeance and not petty monetary business with his slaves. And the much more serious conclusion of the episode detracts attention from the main thread of the story. We have therefore to conclude that it was not originally part of the parable. It probably refers to an incident in the life of Archelaus (Jos. Ant. xvii. 11) and it may well be that Jesus told it, not as a parable, but to serve, like his description of the ways of Gentile rulers (Mark x. 42, Luke xxii. 25), as a contrast to the ways of the kingdom of God. Luke says that it was told on the way from Jericho, a city whose buildings would remind them of Archelaus, to Jerusalem where Jesus was "to give his life a ransom for many." The king of the story came back to kill those who had refused him as their king: Jesus was coming back to Jerusalem to be killed by the people whom he had lived to serve.

There is some reason to think that the original parable ended with "mine own with usury." The rest is either different in Matthew and Luke or gathers round the saying, "Unto every one that hath shall be given . . ." which does not fit the parable, for none of the servants had of their own, and to only one of the two faithful was more given. "Take from him the pound (or talent)" reads as

though it had been added to support the mistaken interpretation, for it forgets that he had already resigned it and was glad to be rid of it.

The parable of the wise and foolish virgins is given us only by Matt. (xxv. 1-13):—

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. 2 And five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish. 3 They that *were* foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: 4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. 5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. 6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. 7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. 8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are going out. 9 But the wise answered, saying, *Not so*, lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. 10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. 11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. 12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. 13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour.

When we read of the shut door and the bridegroom's harsh answer, our sympathies tend to pass over to the excluded, and this is itself enough to warrant the suspicion that something is wrong either with the parable or its interpretation or both. And as Dr. McNeile (*op. cit.* pp. 360 ff.) points out "an earthly bridegroom would hardly act or speak thus," and the house would be not his, but the bride's father's. He also points out that v. 1 tells us that "they went out to meet the bridegroom," while in v. 6 comes the cry, "Go ye out to meet him." This suggests that v. 1 has undergone editorial change. We note also that, though the moral of the parable is given as, "Watch therefore," the wise virgins slept no less than the foolish. We are thus compelled to conclude that the evangelist puts the parable to a use for which it was not created and has modified the story itself to fit this use. We note also that the last clause of v. 10 and vv. 11 and 12 are largely the same as part of the metaphorical description of judgment in Luke xiii. 25-27, where they fit their context much better. So that it seems likely that the original parable ended with the entry of the wise to the marriage, and that the rest was added from another context to give the desired apocalyptic significance.

In Matt. vii. 16-20 (and its parallel Luke vi. 43,

44) we seem to have another instance in which two originally distinct parables have been conflated:—

16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

If with this we compare Matt. xii. 33, "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit," it can hardly be denied that the latter gives us the clearer picture and better sense. It speaks of fruit trees only, for the cedar is good, but not because of its fruit; and, of fruit trees, it is strictly true—the fruit is the test. The parable bears directly on the controversy in which we here find it, and which rose from the Pharisees' attack, "This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils" (Matt. xii. 24)—"Your garden will tell you that such good fruit comes not from so evil a tree."

But in the Sermon on the Mount as reported by Matthew and Luke, this parable (as above) is con-

fused by the introduction of what is evidently quite a distinct one—" Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles ? " This does not concern good trees and bad: vines, thorns and thistles are not trees at all. The plants chosen here because of their unproductiveness are evidently also chosen because they specialize in self-defence, while the two fruits, figs and grapes, come from plants whose preservation depends not upon defensive spikes but upon the value of their gifts to man. The parable bears directly upon one of the main points at issue between Jesus and the Pharisees: they maintained that their religion must defend itself by sternly maintained aloofness: Jesus points out that this aloofness is barren, and that signal service is a better protection than provocative unapproachableness.

The artistic rights of a parable may also sometimes be useful in determining its meaning. In Mark ii. 18-20, we read:—

18 And John's disciples and the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not ? 19 And Jesus said unto them, Can the sons of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them ? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20 But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall

be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in that day.

Verse 20 is generally taken as describing an unusual and violent abduction of the bridegroom and thus as being a reference by Jesus to his own death. But there seems to be no warrant for taking the word translated "shall be taken away" as implying violence. Then, too, the force of the argument, "Can the sons of the bridechamber fast while the bridegroom is with them?" depends entirely upon an appeal to a customary and natural state of affairs, and the force of what follows will suffer unless it also describes what is customary and natural; and it is not customary or natural for the bridegroom to be abducted. But what does happen is that when the marriage is effected, the bridegroom's bachelor friends, the sons of the bridechamber, do almost always lose him to some extent, sometimes entirely.

And to understand the figure in this way has in the first place certain negative advantages. We need not understand Jesus as here referring to his death, which has always been a difficulty, for the incident is early both by its place in the record and its implication that it was when Jesus' attitude towards fasting first became noticeable. And it is not easy to think that Jesus spoke of his death long before "he began to teach that the Son of man must suffer" (Mk. viii. 31).

As a matter of fact also the time of sorrow which he here predicts for his disciples did not happen after his death but before. Within a few hours after his death the resurrection experiences turned their sorrow to joy, but, before it, there was a long time of stress and apprehension. Jesus knew himself led by that which would strain the loyalty and perplex the hearts of his followers. Costly and stern would be the further reaches of that intent which found its present concomitant in joy. Beside the picture of the bridegroom rejoicing with his friends, we set another, "And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid" (Mark x. 32).

Both the figure and the facts of this parable remind us of a passage in the life of St. Francis, when the revels of his youth were about to give way to complete devotion. At the breaking up of a banquet his friends missed him, and finding him deep in thought, accused him of intending marriage. He answered, "Yes, I am thinking of taking a wife fairer, richer, purer than you could ever imagine"; and before long he was lost to his boon companions by his marriage with the bride of whom he was thinking—Poverty.

Attention to form will not only help us to choose

between two versions of another saying, but will suggest its occasion. Luke xi. 11-13 reads:—

11 If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if *he ask* a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? 12 Or if he shall ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion? 13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

Matt. vii. 9-11 has much the same, but instead of "the Holy Spirit" has "good things," which many scholars think more authentic, but Jesus is not likely to have described God's gifts in the same terms as men's gifts, so that Luke's "the Holy Spirit" has some claim to be what Jesus said, since God alone can give this gift.

In both Gospels it follows the saying beginning, "Ask, and it shall be given unto you . . ." as if to support this promise with argument. But the saying goes on, "Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," enjoining thus a general attitude to life, of which prayer is only a part. So that the juxtaposition seems due to nothing more than the recognition that both sayings have something to do with prayer, while the form of the second saying suggests very strongly that, though it concerns prayer, it was not in the first instance a direct

exhortation to pray. For the point of the figure is, not that when the child asks the father gives, but that when the child asks for a good thing, the father will not give him an evil and dangerous counterfeit.

And here we may note that against Luke's three alternatives (as above) Matthew has only two, a stone for a loaf and a serpent for a fish; but in two very important witnesses for the text (B and Syr Sin supported by Marc. and Orig.) Luke has only serpent for fish and scorpion for egg, making it probable that the stone for a loaf was introduced into Luke from Matthew. But since Matthew shows a tendency to modification in the direction of the commonplace (cf. Matt. xvii. 20 and Luke xvii. 5, 6), it is likely that their common source had originally only the more striking and deadly figures of serpent for fish and scorpion for egg. The impression is thus deepened that the saying was not intended merely as an exhortation to prayer, but as an emphatic repudiation of the suggestion that God, being asked for good, would give evil. This, together with Luke's term for the gift of God, " the Holy Spirit," suggests an occasion in which the saying would form a powerful argument. The Pharisees said that Jesus cast out demons by the prince of the demons: Jesus claimed to do it by the Spirit (or finger) of God (Matt. xii. 28, Luke xi. 20); which would raise the question, how was Jesus sure of this? And the

saying under consideration appeals to the instincts of fatherhood for evidence that if he asked God for the Holy Spirit, God would not give him a demon. And if this saying was directed against his calumniators, it would explain the phrase, " If ye being evil," for Jesus does not elsewhere call his disciples or the people " evil," though he does say of the Pharisees in this controversy, " How can ye, being evil, speak good things ? " (Matt. xii. 34). It also explains why, in the conclusion of the saying, those to whom God gives the Spirit are not those to whom Jesus speaks: there is a sudden turn from the second to the third person, " If *ye*, being evil, know how to give . . . how much more shall the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to *them* that ask him."

When we compare Luke vi. 40:—

" The disciple is not above his teacher; but every one when he is perfected shall be as his teacher,"

with Matt. x. 24, 25:—

" A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his teacher, and the servant as his lord,"

we find the Lucan saying clear in form and intelligible: a good teacher is not satisfied until he has made his pupil as good as himself. By calling the preceding saying (" Can the blind lead the blind ? shall they not both fall into the ditch ? ") a parable Luke implies that this is not one, and the literal

sense in the context is clear. By the blind leading the blind, Jesus no doubt meant the Rabbinic teachers whose teaching was a chain of precedent. His figure suggests that unless there be somewhere at the head of the line a teacher who can see for himself and need not depend upon precedent, it is obvious that all must go astray. But if there is such a teacher, it is the mark of a good teacher that when he has done with his pupils they are as good as himself; and the teacher who sees for himself will not be content till he has taught his pupils to see for themselves; which was no doubt Jesus' ideal. Then follows the saying about the mote and beam, bidding us, if we would help others to see, first to be humbly honest with ourselves. In Matt. (xv. 14) the saying about " blind guides " is part of Jesus' controversy with the scribes and Pharisees on " the tradition of the elders ": if this was its occasion we see how pointed would be all that follows it in Luke vi. 39-42.

In Matt. x. 24, 25, the added parallel seems to have prejudiced the sense. Ought not the pupil, if he can, to go further than his teacher ? What has any learner to do with " enough " ? On the other hand, parity between lord and slave is a contradiction in terms. Matthew seems to have combined two originally separate sayings, one of which appears in better form in Luke, while the other, " The servant is not above his lord " (the application of which will

be considered later) appears independently in John xv. 20 and with a parallel other than Matthew's in John xiii. 16.

In all cases, whether we have variant versions or not, attention to the form of the figure is the first essential to understanding. For instance when we read, " What things soever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them " (Mark xi. 24) we might be tempted to think that Jesus is here enjoining the recently popular mental mendacity by which we tell ourselves that we are this or that, in the hope that our untruth will prove a prophecy. But a regard for the figure tells us that there are two steps in getting what we ask, one when the giver consents to our request and another when he fulfils his promise. Jesus here tells us that when we bring our needs to God, the first and essential thing is to believe that he is willing to give us all the good that can be; if we believe this, then our appropriation of the good will surely follow. That the " whatsoever " has its own conditions is made clear from the next verse, where we are told that it is useless to pray for forgiveness, unless we are willing to forgive.

CHAPTER V

PARABLES OF ISRAEL AND THE NATIONS

We have seen that it was the hope and aim of Jesus to win Israel as a nation for the service of the kingdom of God, but that after his nation had rejected and killed him, his followers tended to forget this and to regard all his hope and intent as having been fulfilled in the Church. Hence there was a tendency to look upon certain of his utterances as having been spoken to his followers, when the utterances themselves indicate that they were spoken to Jews as Jews.

The most convincing of these is Matt. v. 13:—

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."[1]

Matthew gives it as spoken to the disciples: Mark (ix. 50) also gives the central part of it (amongst other sayings about salt) as spoken to the disciples: Luke (xiv. 34, 35) gives all but Matthew's first clause as spoken to "great multitudes." And since Matthew's arrangement of discourse is generally

[1] The salt of Palestine contained impurities less soluble than salt, so that when exposure had dissolved the salt, material was left that looked like salt, but had not its savour.

topical and Mark's at this point obviously so, there is no reliable evidence that these words were actually spoken specially to the disciples; and it is extremely difficult to think that they were. Did not Jesus regard himself as able to restore savour to his followers even when they failed? Jesus might say to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan," but he did not therefore think Peter incapable of redemption. This saying about the salt is a solemn warning of irremediable loss, and can hardly have been spoken to any individual souls by Jesus with his redemptive faith. But it was simply true of the nation in view of their world destiny. In knowledge of God, Israel was the salt of the earth: even in the Fourth Gospel, with its strong anti-Judaistic tendencies, it is acknowledged that "Salvation is from the Jews" (John iv. 22). And as with the savour of the salt, the power to impart is the evidence of possession. But the point is here—if the Jews, supreme in the knowledge of God and therefore able to give savour to the life of the world, should fail in the exercise of their privilege, from what other people can they supply their lack? And of what use are they in the world? If they will not be "the salt of the earth" in good earnest, they must not complain of being "trodden under foot of men."

Here it should be remembered that neither the Old Testament nor the New gives evidence that

salt was notable for any other property than its most obvious one of taste and the power to impart taste. If its cleansing and preservative qualities were known, that knowledge has left no trace. In speech, either simple or figurative, it is the taste and power to give taste that is emphasized, as in Lev. ii. 13, Job vi. 6, Col. iv. 6, and the saying under consideration. This suggests that Jesus here puts religion before his hearers as that which imparts interest, zest, value to life, that without which life is insipid. It suggests that though the Jews had nothing to contribute to the world like the art of Greece or the polity of Rome, yet they had that for lack of which ennui must consume the soul, that which could turn "the impracticable hours" into the opportunity of the Eternal. The New Testament is full of Jews of all sorts, but not one is irreligious and not one is afflicted with tedium.

And with the saying just considered, we should include the one that follows it :—

14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. 15 Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under a bushel, but on a stand ; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Its first words reaffirm the old prophecy, "I will

give thee . . . for a light of the Gentiles " (Is. xlii. 6). And that Jesus had the nation in mind appears in what follows, for the " city set on a hill " would to the Jew be Jerusalem. The next verse reminds his hearers that, like salt, the value of a light is in what it imparts : a light that keeps itself to itself is absurd. The last verse especially, " Let your light so shine . . ." gains in point and loses in difficulty, if we understand it as spoken to Jews as such with regard to the effect of their conduct upon the Gentiles. The Jews by the rigidity of their insistence upon the barriers between themselves and others had earned for their religion the contempt of the Gentiles. Jesus would make them see the absurdity of ways maintained in ostensible honour of God, which resulted in the bringing of his name and worship into contempt. He bids them so let the truth of God's fatherhood shine through their acts that men would glorify him. Unless we understand it so—of Jew over against Gentile—it contradicts the saying of vi. 1, " Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men to be seen of them," which clearly has in view the individual hearer over against his fellow Jew. Between Jew and Jew anonymous charity would serve God's glory best. But the nation that knew God ought to seek by its conduct to commend its faith to a world that knew Him not.

The national scope of Jesus' aim is implied in a short saying included in the instructions with which he sent his messengers throughout Israel. He told them to take no money with them but to depend for hospitality upon those to whom they were sent. And, as his justification for this injunction, he said, "For the workman is worthy of his meat" (Matt. x. 10) or "of his hire" (Luke x. 7). The implication is that they went as the servants of those to whom they were sent, i.e., that the message of Jesus was the business of the nation. That this was what Jesus meant appears in Luke xxii. 35, 36:—

35 And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing. 36 Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take *it*, and likewise *his* scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. 37 For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end.

Verse 37 makes it clear that Jesus spoke these words in view of his rejection by his nation. Israel having repudiated his message, his messengers could no longer be regarded as in the service of the nation and the method based on that assumption must be rescinded.

Parables of Israel and the Nations

There are other parables the national incidence of which is undeniable, though not always explicitly acknowledged by the evangelists.

Luke (xiii. 6-9) gives the parable of the barren fig tree in immediate sequence to Jesus' refusal to recognize any special wickedness in the Galilæans whom Pilate murdered or the men killed by the fall of the tower in Siloam:—

6 He spake also this parable; A certain *man* had a fig tree planted in his vineyard ; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. 7 Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground ? 8 And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung *it*: 9 And if it bear fruit, *well:* and if not, *then* after that thou shalt cut it down.

The privileged position of Israel among the nations is reflected in the fig tree towering solitary among the vines. But the parable hints at recent barrenness: there had been a long, dead period in Israel's religious history ; now there was movement again, and there was danger lest the appearance of prophets like John and Jesus should be taken as a sign of divine favour and so contribute to national self-complacence. In the parable Jesus warns the Jews that, just as special misfortune does

not show special wickedness, so the special activity of God's goodness in their midst must not be taken as a sign of his approval. It was in fact his mercy giving them a last chance. Let them not mistake the offer of opportunity for the evidence of approval. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." But in spite of its element of warning, the peculiar interest of this parable for us is that it gives definite evidence that Jesus, when he uttered it, had some hope of winning the nation as a whole.

The same theme of Israel's danger through the very privilege of its position, appears in the parable of the supper, the form of which we have already (p. 60 ff.) discussed. The point of the story is that those who had already accepted the invitation, the privileged friends of the host, were the very ones who finally refused, and especially, that the affluence and position that secured their invitation were the very conditions that so occupied them with their own concerns and so filled them with a sense of their own importance, that when the time came they slighted the privilege which their privileged position had brought them.

In so far as the parable hints at a privileged relation to God, it would apply not to any particular class within Israel but to the nation as a whole. It was in the Jews' pride of national privilege that Jesus found an obstacle to that repentance which

would bring them to their highest privilege in the kingdom of God. And the filling of the supper with the unprivileged, the outsiders from the highways beyond the city bounds, hinted that what Israel might miss through its arrogance as a privileged nation, would be welcomed by the large world without.

It will have been noticed that what Jesus says of the national incidence of his work almost always involves a reference to the Gentiles ; and it could hardly be otherwise. There is ample evidence that the purview, the compassion and the hope of Jesus reached beyond Israel to the larger world. A very high proportion of his references to ancient history are to Israel's contacts with the Gentile—Naaman, the widow of Zarephath, the Ninevites, the Queen of the South, the men of Sodom and Gomorrah. He called Jerusalem "the city of the great King" recalling Mal. i. 14, "I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is reverenced among the Gentiles." One of the temptations in the wilderness shows him thinking of all the nations of the world. The specific act for which the authorities were moved to put him to death was his cleansing of the Court of the Gentiles on the plea, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations." The central term of his teaching, "the Kingdom of God," brought with it to all Jewish thought the promise

that Israel, the chosen of God, should rule over all the nations of the world (Dan. vii. 27). The ordinary Jew interpreted this as political dominance secured either by the divinely helped military power of Israel or by direct divine intervention: Jesus saw that the true ruler and king was he who gave best and most costly service (Mark x. 42-45); so that we may conclude that Jesus' ideal for his people was that they should be first in the kingdom of God by rendering the world the supreme service of giving it the truth of God, and thus being, as the prophet had foretold, the light of the Gentiles.

In view of all this, it may seem strange that when Paul began to preach to the Gentiles he roused bitter opposition from a considerable section of the Palestinian Church. The evidence of his letters, supported by the story of Acts, shows that the early Palestinian Church was not aware of any injunction from Jesus to preach to the Gentiles, and had made no attempt to do it. They allowed it only under pressure of God's will now newly made known: even then, they did not recognize it as a duty for themselves. "When they perceived the grace that was given unto me," writes Paul (Gal. ii. 9), "James, Cephas and John, who are reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that we should go unto the Gentiles and they unto the circumcision."

So strong is this, the earliest evidence that we have of what in this matter was understood by the early Palestinian Church through which all that we know of Jesus has come, that it is impossible to think that Jesus instructed his disciples to preach to the Gentiles or even spoke openly of its being done. It is true that such sayings are attributed to him, but in every case there are, besides the difficulty just discussed, other elements of uncertainty. Mark xiv. 9 may easily have been the comment of a narrator understood as the words of Jesus. Mark xiii. 10 is found among apocalyptic material of a composite character. Matt. xxviii. 18-20 may be a summary of all that Jesus was believed to have said after his death to his followers, including especially what Paul himself received in vision from his Lord.

But this leaves us with the question, If Jesus meant Israel to be the light of the Gentiles, why did he not speak of preaching to them?

One reason may be gathered from the instant uproar that was roused some years later when, in the Temple yard, Paul spoke of it: his speech was drowned with yells of "Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live." Had Jesus broached the matter openly, his work would have been brought to an immediate end. The nation was not in a state of mind to give sane consideration to a direct proposition of this kind.

Even had they accepted it, the acceptance would have increased their religious arrogance and they would have fulfilled the injunction with a condescension or contempt which would have denied or poisoned the content of the message. Before the Jew could profitably be enjoined to preach God to the Gentile, he must learn to love him as also God's child. Apart from this, preaching would be worse than useless. And this was true of the disciples as well as of the Jews generally.

From these considerations we may understand the way Jesus took. In this matter (as in others) he did not try to anticipate the native conclusions of the spirit by imposing upon others the results of his own foresight. He worked by endeavouring to bring men to that spiritual stature at which they would see for themselves the duty that he saw. The love of God must make the Jew love the Gentile before he could speak to the Gentile of God's love. The culmination of what seems to have been his earliest teaching, as given in the core of "the Sermon on the Mount," is "Love your enemies," which would include the Gentile and would probably be understood as concerning him chiefly, since the "neighbour," with which the enemy is contrasted, was understood to be "fellow Jew." And it should be noted that the unspiritual things in Judaism which Jesus attacked, the ways of Sabbath-keeping

and laws of ritual cleanness, were those which made a barrier between Jew and Gentile, while other unspiritual things, like animal sacrifice, he left to die a natural death. And in this connection Jesus' fellowship with publicans and sinners involved in principle an attack upon the barriers that the Law put between Jew and Gentile.

And since in this matter direct utterance would not have been listened to, the theme of Israel's relation and duty to the Gentile was precisely of the sort for which parable provided the best means, for it eluded the initial refusals of prejudice, provoked thought, and inclined in the desired direction. The parables to be considered in this chapter seem to have been spoken with this object, though, for reasons already considered, the evangelists do not appear always to have recognized it.

After the parable of the man in charge, Luke adds (xii. 47, 48):—

47 And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*. 48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

This seems originally to have been a saying independent of that which now precedes it, for there we have already been told that the delinquent has been "cut in sunder," which should probably be taken literally (A. Plummer, Luke, I.C.C., p. 332), and therefore leaves no room for stripes. There, also, the interest is concentrated on the one man in charge and turns upon his master's delay: here the proposition is general on all points. We have again, as in the parable of the supper, a warning of the responsibility of privilege, but here the reference to the Gentile is much more explicit. Every Jew who listened would take "that servant which knew his lord's will" to mean himself and all his fellow Jews, for it was they who had the Law; "he that knew not" would be as readily understood to be the Gentile. And Jesus by the parable bids them see that to make a perquisite of privilege will make them "only supreme in misery."

In the parable of the mustard seed, where Matthew's version (Matt. xiii. 31 f.) differs from Mark's (iv. 31 f.) it agrees with Luke's (xiii. 18 f.) and vice versa. We may conclude therefore that the parable was in Q as well as in Mark, and that Q's version is better represented by Luke than by Matthew. This is important, because when we read Mark's version, with v. 31 translated literally:—

30 And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it? 31 As unto a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, being less than all the seeds that be in the earth: 32 And when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the birds of the air may lodge under the shadow of it, and compare it with Luke's:—

18 Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? 19 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the birds of the air lodged in the branches of it,

we see that Luke has no equivalent to Mark's statement about the smallness of the seed, and since in Mark this statement is made by a parenthesis whose insertion leaves half a sentence unfinished and is followed by a new beginning, there is reason to think that in it we have a colloquial comparison intruded into the original form of the parable. Such emphasis upon the unique insignificance of beginning is not really germane to emphasis upon the unique greatness of ultimate growth, and might easily mislead the hearer as to the point of the parable, or make him reject the cogency of its comparison. We should therefore prefer Luke's simpler form.

The parable is typical in the way in which it carries its audience in innocent agreement until the last sentence, which suddenly draws them further than they expected or intended. Its first part would be a picture of Israel such as the Jew loved—the special care of God, the long history of marvellous growth until Israel was conscious of being greater than all nations in the greatest of all concerns, the knowledge and service of God. And then in the last sentence (on which the simpler Lucan form throws the greater emphasis) Jesus put his point—the evidence of real greatness is hospitality: the glory of Israel's destiny will be in a boon given to life other than its own. And so Jesus gives his picture of the Kingdom, Israel finding its true greatness by serving the nations with that in which God has so blessed it.

It was perhaps part of the intended significance of the parable that, in giving shelter to the birds, the grown plant is celebrating its own triumph by benefiting its earlier enemies. In any case it should be remembered that a tree sheltering birds was a recognized figure for a great empire giving protection to the nations (cf. Ezek. xvii. 22 f, xxxi. 3 ff., Dan. iv. 10 ff., 20 ff.).

This parable would be very much in point when Jesus was teaching, " My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations " (Mk. xi. 17),

but its position in the record, perhaps also its garden setting, suggest an earlier time ; and there is no doubt that his teaching at Jerusalem had its earlier counterpart.

In Lk. xiv. 7-11 we read:—

7 And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief places; saying unto them, 8 When thou art bidden of any *man* to a wedding, sit not down in the highest place; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; 9 And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest place. 10 But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest place; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. 11 For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Although Luke calls this a parable, his placing of it suggests that he took it as literal advice in a way which cannot have been intended by Jesus, for in that case it would enjoin a hypocritical humility in the interests of arrogance and of a desire, elsewhere (Mark xii. 39) condemned, for the " chief places at feasts ": as such, it would be a

restatement of Prov. xxv. 6 f. on an ethically lower plane.

It may be said that the parable is intended to have spiritual significance, bidding us leave it to God to satisfy our instinct for self-exaltation, which is otherwise likely to bring more chagrin than glory; but this is better said in the direct utterance of v. 11, which is also without the objectionable element made prominent in the parable—the desire to outshine others.

The historic situation suggests a fitter application. One of the greatest dangers of the time was that the Jew was so fervently patriotic, so convinced of Israel's moral and spiritual excellence, that he could tolerate no thought of Israel's place in God's world but that of exaltation above all other nations. It was this that filled the Jew with resentment against the rule of Rome. And it is clear how apt the parable is to this situation. "Your patriotism desires well. But if you are sure of your ground—your superior knowledge and service of God—then since he is lord of the feast, your best plan is to sit lowly and leave it to him to do you justice. That will result in greater honour than if on your own initiative you appropriate the highest place." And the giving of this counsel in the ridiculous dress of a petty social cunning would go far to disarm resentment of its high wisdom.

We saw that Matthew mistook the parable of the road to judgment as a literal injunction, whereas Luke seems to have recognized it as a parable. The picture (see p. 33 f.) is that of two litigants in a money case on the road to court. If we do not take it literally, there seem to be two possibilities open to us. It might have an individual application on the assumption that for every man life is a road to judgment. The argument is, In the long run justice will be done: you can do it now with dignity and on your own initiative: if you wait, your opportunity of initiative will pass, and then you will be compelled to pay "the uttermost farthing," with loss of liberty and ease to boot. What is due from others to you, leave to the judge: see that your duty to them is discharged.

But Luke's setting of the parable, after and in attachment to Jesus' complaint that the men of that day could judge of the weather signs but not of the signs of the time, suggests a national application; and there are certain considerations that confirm this. The parable would lose its power unless its hearers could easily recognize its case to be theirs. And although the Jews of Jesus' day would no doubt agree that all men as individuals were on the road to judgment, they would hardly recognize themselves as accompanied by their adversary. But it was different with the national situation. One of the most

fiercely held convictions of the time was that Israel and Israel's adversary were moving along the road to the judgment of God. The day was speedily coming when God would judge between Israel and Rome.

Jesus, by his parable, turns the flank of this conviction—"If you are sure that God will judge between you and the Gentile, then you need not trouble about the Gentile's debt to you: God will see to that. With God's judgment ahead, you can afford to take the initiative in all righteousness without waiting for reciprocity, and you cannot afford to do otherwise."

Matthew places the parable of the vineyard labourers (Matt. xx. 1-16) immediately after the passage taken over from Mark which told first of the rich ruler's refusal, then of Peter's question, "Behold, we have left all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" and then of Jesus' reply which ends (much in the words of Mark), "But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first." Then comes Matthew's parable:—

1 For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man *that is* an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. 2 And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. 3 And he

went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, 4 And said unto them: Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. 5 Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. 6 And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? 7 They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard. 8 So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them *their* hire, beginning from the last unto the first. 9 And when they came that *were hired* about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. 10 But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. 11 And when they had received *it*, they murmured against the goodman of the house, 12 Saying, These last have wrought *but* one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. 13 But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? 14 Take *that* thine *is*, and go thy way: I will give unto this last even as unto thee. 15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil,

because I am good ? 16 So the last shall be first, and the first last.

The juxtaposition of Marcan and non-Marcan material tells us that the setting of the parable is due to the evangelist rather than his source. And we may note that his way of appending to the parable the saying from which it starts—"The last shall be first . . ." has a parallel in the repetition of "By their fruits shall ye know them" in Matt. vii. 16 and 20. Matthew evidently saw in the parable a picture of heavenly rewards bestowed on the followers of Jesus, and at the same time shows that he took the saying, "The first shall be last . . ." as intended to have this application. That he was wrong about the meaning of this saying appears from Jesus' fuller exposition of it in Mark x. 42ff, "Whosoever of you will be the chiefest shall be servant of all, for even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister." And even if he was right, the parable can hardly be said to illustrate it, for the first were last only in time of payment, the reward being the same in each case, while in state of mind there was not difference of degree but the opposites of joy and complaint.

To say that the intent of the parable is to teach that rewards hereafter will be equal is to make it say indirectly what might have been better said directly ; for so taken, most people on reading the

parable have to confess that it leaves them with a sense of unfairness. But a parable does its work badly if it does not, in the sphere of its story, win us to an unreserved judgment, which can be then carried over to the sphere of its application. We may probably therefore conclude that the parable was never intended to be so applied. And when we see what it is that makes the owner's action fair, we find it still more difficult to regard the parable as depicting reward hereafter. It was not a case of largess but of the penny a day that a man needed to keep him alive ; none got any more than this, and the late comers were not to blame for their lateness. We thus see that the owner was not whimsically free-handed, but a man with an enlightened sense of what was right. But if, in order to feel that his liberality was fair, we have to remember that it was confined to what was necessary for life, the parable ceases to be applicable to the rewards of heavenly bliss.

Apart from this, the parable emphasizes the contrast between those who " agreed for a penny a day " and those who trusted the owner to do what was right: it was only the bargainers who complained. Unless this has something to do with the significance of the parable, it is an unnecessary and confusing complication. But a distinction of this sort has no place amongst the followers of Jesus.

On the other hand, this distinction between those who stand in covenant relation to their master and those who do not, would at once suggest to the hearers of Jesus the distinction between the people of the covenant and the rest of the world. Their supposition would be strengthened by the late comers' excuse, " No man hath hired us," for every Jew gloried in the national privilege of knowing God's commands. The parable is thus evidently aimed at the Jews, who considered themselves to stand meritoriously in covenant relationship with God, and who resented the idea of sharing God's grace equally with the uncovenanted Gentile who had not, as their nation had, wrought and suffered through the centuries in the cause of God. The parable might well have been spoken in connection with Jesus' plea for the Temple as a house of prayer for all nations (Mark xi. 17). The Jewish objection would be, Why should they who have not borne " the burden and heat of the day " now have equality in privilege ? And the parable would answer that this leaves out of count the Gentile's lack of opportunity, the goodness of God and the fact that religious truth is not an honorary privilege but a necessity of life.

Had the vineyard owner acted from the desire to be fantastically generous he would have paid the men in the reverse order: then the longest

workers would have gone off with their pay and he would have had nothing but thanks. His method won him a minimum of thanks and a maximum of complaint, and therefore suggests that he was paying all equally, not out of contempt for economy, but because he felt it not right that men willing to work should miss what was needed for life's maintenance. The parable made clear that behind the Jewish exclusiveness lay the tacit assumption that religious truth was a luxury of the privileged rather than a necessity for all men, an assumption which still survives in the same unacknowledged state in the Christian who is averse from missionary enterprise.

It was after seeing those who worked one, three, six and nine hours each receive a penny, that the earliest workers expected to receive more. Their covenanted position had given them a sense of superiority over the others, which made them annoyed at the human justice of the owner in dealing with all equally. Complaining of unfairness, they were really asking for unfair privilege, for the inequality of service was not of will but of circumstance. Had their own sense of superiority been confirmed with the bargained penny, while the rest went more or less hungry, they would not have complained.

To Jesus' insistence that the Court of the Gentiles

should be restored to its right use and the Temple become a house of prayer for all the nations, or at least to the conception of Israel's duty to the Gentiles there evinced, another parable attaches itself. If Israel was to show the Gentile any real religious hospitality it would involve the infringement of those ritual appointments of the law whose effect was to set a barrier between Gentile and Jew. It was upon these matters, the method of Sabbath keeping and especially the ritual of clean and unclean, that Jesus differed from the authorities and incurred their censure and opposition. They doubtless feared that if these barriers were removed, Israel's peculiar possession would be sunk in the sea of heathendom and its peculiar witness lost. Dr. Klausner in his *Jesus of Nazareth* (Eng. trs., p. 390 f) says they were right in this, and were therefore justified in repudiating his teaching. But Jesus knew that Israel's service to the Gentile was essential to the kingdom of God, and that this danger was only the shadow of a great possibility:—

" Unto what shall I liken the kingdom of God ? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until it was all leavened " (Luke xiii. 20, 21 ; Matt. xiii. 33).

The leaven was swamped and dispersed, but by its very disintegration was the more rapidly and completely effective in transforming the whole in

which it was immersed. In what he asked for, Israel was called to take a risk and make a sacrifice, but in and by these very things would achieve an activity of spiritual life no longer needing to be hedged and segregated but able to propagate itself and work through all the world's life.

It is to be noted that in common speech leaven stood for the infective power of evil, and that Jesus, applying it to the transforming power of good, makes what was probably a new use of it. And with this goes another new thing in his teaching, the recognition that this invasive goodness, able to overcome evil with good, was what goodness must come to when it knows itself, its Source and its task.

We have seen (p. 68) that the saying which in Q is appended to the parable of the pounds ("Unto every one that hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away from him") does not fit the story. And since we find it in Mark (iv. 25) with another application, it has little claim to be considered as giving the original significance of the parable. Nor has the saying any reference to the point of the story, which surely lies in the conversation between the slothful servant and his master. The master points out that the servant's excuse for doing nothing with

his trust is really a self-condemnation ; so that the central interest of the story is in the servant's excuse, which is his estimate of his master's character, "I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow." The parable therefore seems aimed against some class of men who, being charged with omitting to fulfil a divine trust, defend themselves by appealing to their conception of God; and the point of the parable is to show that, even so, their action belies their creed.

So that to find the occasion of the parable we must ask, In what way could anyone in Jesus' day have appealed to a conception of God as one who reaped where he did not sow? And we are reminded of the common Jewish thought of God's relation to the Gentiles—he had not given them the Law, yet he demanded righteousness from them. And on the other hand the man who would not undertake the risk of traffic, but by seclusion guarded his lord's trust against all loss, was just the ideal of scribe and Pharisee in "hedging" the Law and refusing all contacts, especially with Gentiles, that might infringe it.

When Jesus ate with publicans and sinners, when he defended the rights of the Gentile in the Temple, his implied or expressed appeal was to the generosity of God. The Jewish censure of his

action was based on the opposite—God is strict: he has committed to us the Law, which we must preserve intact: it cannot be his will that we should risk infringement of the Law for the Gentiles' sake; for he cannot be counted generous to them, but rather exacting, since he demands righteousness from them, though he did not give them the Law.

The condemnation was that, had the man been sincere in his plea, he would have done what he could to increase his lord's money in ways that did not involve the risk of loss. The implied charge against the opponents of Jesus was, " You refuse contact with the publican, sinner and Gentile on the ground that God is strict and exacting. If you were sincere in your plea, you would be found doing everything possible within the limits of the Law to win these people to the righteousness which God demands of them ; but that you have not done." If the parable were spoken about the time of the cleansing of the Temple (both Matthew and Luke place it in the last days), the need for such an act would be evidence of the plea's unreality. The Pharisaic connivance at the abuse of the court of the Gentiles showed that it was something other than fear for a divine trust that made them exclusive. Other evidence would be in their leaving the common people like sheep without a shepherd (Matt. ix. 36, Mark vi. 34), and in the binding heavy burdens

on men's shoulders without doing anything to help in the bearing (Matt. xxiii. 4), the gist of which seems to be that they defined the Law for the multitude but did nothing to help them fulfil it, rather adding discouragement by their aloofness.

It is probable that the ancient hearer, like the modern reader, of the parable found his attention arrested by the definiteness of the master's recrimination, "Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required it with interest?" So outstanding an element doubtless had something to say as to the judgment evoked by the parable. And we remember that the Law forbade a Jew to take interest from his fellow Jew, but allowed him to take it from the Gentile: any interest available in Palestine must therefore come from contact with the Gentile. So that if the main intent of the parable touched Israel's relation to the Gentiles, this item adds point. It reminded his hearers that whatever excuses they might proffer for leaving the Gentile's religion to itself, they were willing enough to allow contact with him for the sake of their purses.

The parable's reference to bankers or money-changers reminds us that probably the best attested of all the uncanonical sayings of Jesus is, "Be ye good money-changers" ("good" as a coin is "good"), which has been interpreted vaguely

and variously. But when we remember that much of the current coin of Palestine in Jesus' day was of Gentile origin, and that the Temple dues had to be paid in Jewish money, it is probable that to his audiences the term money-changer would immediately suggest contact and commerce with the Gentile. In that case, the saying would suggest—Extend to your religion what you find profitable in your finance: take from the Gentile whatever genuinely good thing he has to offer, and give him of your good in return.

We have a reference to this same relationship in the so-called parable of the sheep and goats, where the king says, "I was a foreigner, and ye entertained me," for it is probable that we have here a picture of the judgment of all nations, both Jew and Gentile. We may also note that, in the parable of the Good Samaritan, the priest and Levite who "pass by on the other side" are probably intended to be understood as deterred from helping by fear of defilement by blood or death, and thus the ceremonial law upon which the Jew was so insistent and which was so great a barrier between Jew and Gentile, is shown to be in conflict with what he was willing to acknowledge as one of the greatest commandments—to love one's neighbour as oneself.

We saw (p. 31 f.) that for several reasons it was not

possible to accept as authentic the interpretation appended to the parable of the children in the market place. Jesus likens the Jews of his day to children in the market place sitting (and therefore tired and probably peevish) and complaining that the other children will neither dance to their piping nor beat the bosom to their mourning, while the real deterrent is, not the unreasonableness of the others, but the fact that the first children want in both cases to do the sitting part and to leave the hard work to the others. And when Jesus compared the Jews of his day to one lot of children, we can hardly avoid concluding that the others stand for the Gentiles. It was the Jews' complaint that the Gentile did not follow their lead either in the sober business of morals or in the joy of religion. But the fact of the matter was that they would contemplate full fellowship with the Gentile only on condition that the Gentile became a Jew and undertook all the national peculiarities of the Law, which was, of course, far harder for the Gentile than for themselves, who were "to the manner born."

After the interpretation of the parable follow the words, "And wisdom is justified of (not "by" rather "by means of") her children" (Matthew has "her works," though even in Matthew some of the best evidences of the text have "children").

"Justified" must here mean "justified in the eyes of men," for wisdom needs justifying neither in itself nor to its children. So that the saying will mean that men who are impervious to wisdom when it comes to them in words, will acknowledge its force when they see it embodied in lives (or deeds). This is quite incompatible with the interpretation to which it is appended : the gist of which is that the Jews refused to follow either John or Jesus. But if we take the parable as depicting the Jewish attitude to the Gentiles, then this saying gives the only cure to the Gentile obtuseness of which the Jew complained, for it says in effect, "Let the Gentiles know your God in your lives and acts, and they will accept your faith," i.e., "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

We have now to consider three short figurative sayings, one of which, "A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid" (Matt. v. 14) has already been mentioned in this chapter. This saying takes us back into early and unsettled times, when there were in general two situations of safety, a place of hiding and a place, such as a hill-top, capable of defence. Obviously you cannot have both at the same time, but this, in their religion, was precisely what the Jews were trying to do, i.e. to maintain an exalted seclusion. The city set on a hill challenged the

world : it could not expect to be left alone. And the hint seems to be, that if Israel did not find its peace in the spiritual conquest of the world, it would provoke an enmity that would be its destruction.

The saying, " Remember Lot's wife " is reported only by Luke (xvii. 32). He sets it immediately after " In that day . . . he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back," as though it was an instance of the danger of being delayed by reluctance. But a reference to the story of Lot (Gen. xix. 23-26) reminds us that he and his wife had reached the appointed place of refuge and that the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah had begun, when Lot's wife looked back, so that her backward look caused no delay and could not have come from reluctance. The present place of the saying therefore is due to someone who had not the story well in mind, and if this was its first position in the Gospel record, it must be considered as a rather inept gloss. But this very ineptness is more easily accounted for if we suppose that the evangelist found an unattached saying which he took to be authentic and placed it in its present position. If so, we must consider the saying by itself, and the story in Genesis makes its meaning clear. The evil treatment of Lot's household by the men of Sodom suggests that the command to keep their faces averted (Gen. xix. 17)

was directed, not against reluctance to leave, but against curiosity concerning the divine judgment, and especially against the desire to gloat over the destruction of their enemies. And if we remember that Sodom and Gomorrah were a by-word for Gentile iniquity, the saying is seen to be directed against the common Jewish interest and delight in divine judgment on the Gentiles.

In Matt. xii. 39 and Luke xi. 29 we are told in almost the same words that Jesus said, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given it but the sign of Jonah the prophet," but what follows in each is very different. Matthew has, "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." This is commonly now regarded as an editorial addition: Jesus was only two nights in the tomb: to proffer the resurrection as a sign was to promise what he had just condemned; and even so the resurrection was a sign only to Jesus' followers, not to the whole generation.

Luke's sequel is, "For as Jonah was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall the Son of man be to this generation," which implies, since the Ninevites saw nothing of the great fish, that to them "the sign of Jonah" was the extraordinary sight of a Jew preaching to Gentiles. And there is evidence

(chiefly in the changes which Luke makes in what he takes over from Mark xiii, e.g., in omitting, "And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations") that the "day" or "coming" of "the Son of man" meant to Luke the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, in which, as we shall see, he probably came very near to what Jesus meant by the term. But it is difficult to see that this explanation can have made the saying any clearer to Jesus' hearers; and we have seen reason to conclude that Jesus never spoke openly of preaching to the Gentiles. So that whether, as Harnack thinks (*Sayings of Jesus*, pp. 23 and 137) Luke here gives us what he found in Q, or not, it is very difficult to regard this explanation as authentic. The conclusion that this saying originally had no explanation will be confirmed by a reference to Mark viii. 12, which is evidently (as Matt. xvi. 4 assumes) a variant account of the same saying:—

12 And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.

The Marcan saying might easily have omitted a simple reference to Jonah as not affecting its general sense and as likely to be unintelligible, but it would be much less likely to have omitted a reference to the Son of man's preaching or to his resurrection.

What then did Jesus mean by "the sign of Jonah"? It should surely be found in the one thing which was given to Jonah as an explicit sign—the growth and destruction of the gourd. If so, then Jesus told those who demanded from him a sign from heaven, that their only sign would be that like Jonah they should learn in their own misery that God's mercy was wider than Israel. Not only is it highly probable that if anyone spoke to a Jewish audience of "the sign of Jonah," they would think of the gourd as the one incident of the story specifically treated as a sign and enforced by divine emphasis, but we may also be sure that since the story of Jonah has its culmination and significance in this sign as emphasizing the width of God's mercy, it would be precisely this for which Jesus would love and use the story.

It should be noted that this saying both in Matthew and Luke occurs in company with the sayings in which the Ninevites and the Queen of the South are compared with the Jews to the disadvantage of the latter; and also that the occasion of this saying suggests that Jesus connected the unspirituality of the demand for a sign with the narrowing nationalism of Jewish religion.

CHAPTER VI

PARABLES OF CONFLICT

ANY detailed consideration of the parables of Jesus must arrange them in groups, and the practical nature of the parable suggests that the grouping should be by their various uses. But owing to the concrete attachment of the parable to life, most of them would earn a place in more than one of whatever categories may be devised; so that the grouping here is merely with the intent to illustrate Jesus' main uses of the parable according to what seems to be the outstanding interest of each.

We have seen that the parable is characteristically a weapon of controversy, and this has been confirmed by almost every parable we have considered. But there are some in which this element is especially prominent, and they happen to be those of whose exact occasion we are best informed. We have already dealt with the most notable of these, the parable of the wicked husbandmen. This, according to Matt. xxi. 28-32, was preceded by the parable of the two sons, the text of which varies greatly in the different authorities, that adopted by the English versions running as follows:—

28 But what think ye? A *certain* man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. 29 He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. 29 And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I *go*, sir: and went not. 31 Whether of them twain did the will of *his* father? They say, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. 32 For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: neither did ye, when ye had seen *it*, repent afterward, that ye might believe him.

In certain very important authorities (D and Syr Sin) the Sanhedrists answer that the son who said, "I go," and went not, did the will of his father rather than the one who said, "I go not" and afterwards went. This is probably what was originally written, for it is far more likely to have been altered than to have been a product of alteration. It is also probably what actually happened, for oriental emphasis upon paternal dignity and "saving the face" would make many a Jew rather have his son disobey than insult him; and anything that makes it unlikely as an honest preference would imply that Jesus expected the other answer, which would be a good reason why his opponents should not give it (so

Jerome and Wellhausen). Then, too, what Jesus says in v. 32 implies that his opponents chose the youth who said "I go," for it likens their conduct to the reply of the other and says nothing of the repentance of publican and harlot. This version exhibits better the fighting qualities of the parable.

Jesus sets before the authorities these two sons and asks their opinion. They, knowing something of his hatred of pretence and of his demand for repentance, would conclude that he himself preferred the repentant son, and was trying to get them to confess to sharing his preference, in order that he might exalt the penitent populace at their expense. The commonly accepted version supposes that this was Jesus' intent and that his opponents fell into the trap.[1] The probability is that neither he nor they were so simple. He puts before them a choice well knowing that they will try to nonplus him with their answer, which they do, giving preference to the face-saving "I go" of the son who went not. Jesus answers that in their approval of the hypocrite they have made their own condemnation complete, for they had neither his politeness nor the subsequent obedience of the boor: they met the call of God in John with patent repudiation unatoned by any later repentance. By the perverseness of their answer,

[1] "It is a wonder any answer was given at all when the purport of the parable was so transparent." Prof. A. B. Bruce, *Expositor's Gk. Test.*, Vol. I, p. 266.

preferring polite pretence, they threw away the one thing they might have claimed in self-defence—that so far as John was concerned, they had never pretended to obey him.

Two short parables belong to Jesus' answer to the attack of the scribes, "By the prince of the demons casteth he out demons" (Mark iii. 22-27, Matt. xii. 24ff., Luke xi. 15ff.). Both are examples of the parable's close relation to concrete circumstance: if we did not know the occasion, they would be unintelligible: as it is we recognize the force of their reply. The first, in Mark's version, is:—

23 And he called them *unto him*, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? 24 And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. 26 And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end.

This amounts to, "Even on your own showing I am making an end of Satan's kingdom," and the end of Satan's kingdom was the beginning of the kingdom of God; hence the additional argument given by Matthew and Luke, "If I by the finger (or Spirit) of God cast out demons, then the kingdom of God is come upon you."

The second parable is given by Mark as:—

27 No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.

Here Jesus flings aside his critics' assumption, and shows that so far as the prince of the demons had anything to do with these exorcisms, they were evidence that in them he had met his master. We have here the same conclusion as in Luke x. 17f., where in reply to the disciples' exclamation, " Lord, even the demons are subject to us in thy name," Jesus says, " I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven," which reaffirms the idea expressed in " then is the kingdom of God come upon you."

These two parables have the strongest possible attestation, being both in Mark and Q, nor are they capable of any other significance; and they are of special interest as showing that Jesus thought of the kingdom of God, not merely or even principally as a thing of the future, but as, in its most important sense, present in his activity.

It will be remembered that we saw reason to think this controversy was also the occasion of the saying, " Will he for a fish give him a serpent? . . . "

In answer to another accusation of the scribes and Pharisees, " This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them," Jesus told the most beautiful of all his

parables, the story of the prodigal (Luke xv. 11-32). Like others, it is vitally related to its occasion, apart from which we should not understand why the story did not end with the prodigal's return.

11 And he said, A certain man had two sons: 12 And the younger of them said to *his* father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth *to me*. And he divided unto them *his* living. 13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. 14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. 15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. 17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, 19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. 20 And he arose, and came to his father.

But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on

his neck and kissed him. 21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. 22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put *it* on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on *his* feet: 23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill *it;* and let us eat, and be merry: 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. 26 And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. 28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him. 29 And he answering said to *his* father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: 30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. 31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. 32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this

thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

The capacity of a parable for complexity and manifoldness of significance is here apparent. It has three chapters, the main concerns of which are respectively the prodigal, the father and the elder brother; and though the last chapter has the fighting point, the other two obviously have each their own meaning and yet each contributes to the point of the whole, and calls from us a judgment on the story which becomes our answer to the criticism of scribe and Pharisee.

It may be noted that the elder brother's attitude is founded on a falsely ungenerous estimate of his father—"Thou never gavest me a kid," though he had "divided unto them his living," and that this ungenerosity of thought to others is the concomitant and support of his own self-righteousness. We are reminded of the parable of the pounds and the slothful servant's defence of himself by putting his own estimate upon his lord's character, "I knew thee that thou art a hard man." We also note that whereas the natural course of events pulls the prodigal up, the elder brother's way has no natural check.

Another parable, that of the rich man and Lazarus, is very difficult to understand unless we see in it a

reply to another challenge of the Pharisees.[1] In Mark viii. 11, 12, we read:—

11 And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him. 12 And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.

This, we saw, was connected with the saying about the sign of Jonah. The demand for a sign from heaven probably referred to the belief that the Law had been given from heaven and that Jesus, if he expected them to accept his modifications of the Law, must produce warrant of like origin. Possibly also the demand was a repudiation of his appeal to his power over evil spirits as evidence of the working of God in him: they wanted something less capable of other explanation, something indubitably from heaven.

The parable runs as follows (Luke xvi. 19-31):—

19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: 20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, 21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the

[1] That this parable had some connection with the demand for a sign from heaven is noted by H. Weinel, *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*, p. 30 ff.

dogs came and licked his sores. 22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; 23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. 25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. 26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that *would come* from thence. 27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: 28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. 29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. 30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. 31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

When we ask the significance of the parable, we

see that to take it as aimed against the callous rich meets with the difficulty that Abraham, in explaining the situation, does not accuse the rich man of callousness, but only of enjoyment. And though Abraham's lenient picture of the situation should probably be regarded only as oriental politeness, yet it indicates that the parable was not told chiefly in order to depict retribution. We have to mark that if this was its intent, then the final dialogue is an unnecessary and unintelligible prolongation; whereas it is just here that the story, as a story, culminates, finding its climax in Abraham's sentence, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." No explanation can justify itself but one that does justice to this. But the situation created by the Pharisees' demand for a sign from heaven was one to which the story so culminating applied very pointedly.

The future life was the very matter on which the Pharisees themselves were sharply at issue with the Sadducees, who refused to believe in it on the ground that it went beyond what was in the Law. So strong was the Pharisaic feeling on the matter that Paul was able on one occasion by an appeal to it to split the vote of the Sanhedrin. In the story of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus hints that here, where the Pharisees were going beyond the Law, a

sign from heaven would seem at first sight exactly what they needed to warrant their belief, and that its absence could be accounted for only on the assumption that heaven knew that a sign from heaven was useless in matters of belief. But if that was so in the Pharisees' case, why not in his ?

We see in this story the art by which parable serves better than naked argument. An eastern audience was only too likely to interrupt a speaker when his discourse grew unacceptable, but any audience will see that a speaker is allowed to finish a story. And in this parable, more than in most others, the hearers did not see where they were being led until its conclusion had closed upon them. The beginning of the story would delight the Pharisees. Jesus was on their side at least in the question of the future life. The whole story was told as they would delight to tell it. The fate of the rich man who " was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day " would please those who like the Pharisees " lived meanly and despised delicacies in diet " (Jos. Ant. xviii. i. 3). They would love to see their boasted ancestor as the centre of the eternal world. Only when the last sentence came would they regret their attention.

These considerations partly answer the question as to how far we can regard the parable as giving Jesus' own thought of the hereafter. Probably very

little. It would be to his purpose to adopt his hearers' notions. That Abraham and not God is the central figure of heaven was probably due to this (it is God himself who speaks to the rich fool), and was convenient, for otherwise Jewish reverence would hardly have permitted the conversation with which the parable ends. The ethical elements of the story are doubtless nearer to Jesus' own thought—the sin of the rich man is precisely the sin of those upon the the left hand in the parable of the Sheep and Goats.

More valuable is the central point of the significance, that conscience is not convinced nor the spiritual world vindicated by signs. And it is in accord with this, that with the unseen world naked before him, the rich man's sympathies are as limited as ever. In the flame, as in the sumptuous fare, he thinks only of the narrow circle: it is not the world's danger, but that of his five brothers, that moves him. The pathetic naturalness of this tells heavily in support of Abraham's final sentence, "Neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

To Jesus' controversy with the scribes and Pharisees belongs also a saying already considered in another connection, "Can the blind guide the blind?" And it seems that we should here take a saying which Luke adds to the parables of the patch and wine-skins, "And no man having drunk old wine desireth new: for he saith, The old is good." Luke

adds it to what he takes over from Mark, so that its position seems to be due to his editorship. The saying can hardly belong to the occasion to which he attaches it, for in the parable of the wine-skin the chief concern is for the new: here we have the reverse—a justified preference for the old. If you do not prefer old wine, it shows that you do not know the taste of it.

Among the interests of Jesus the old can hardly be anything but the ancient scriptures of his people; and the new will be recent additions of like kind, amongst which the two most prominent kinds were the oral tradition of the elders and the apocalyptic books.

With regard to the former, we know that Jesus accused the scribes and Pharisees of " making void the word of God by their tradition " (Mark vii. 13). Here the point of the saying seems to be that though the Rabbis maintained that this elaborated tradition was necessary for the application and preservation of the Law, Jesus regarded it as new wine beside old—any real experience of the worth of the old will make you out of love with the new.

Whether Jesus had in mind also the old and new as represented by the prophets and the later apocalyptists is less certain. But the difference between them is even greater than between the Law and the tradition of the elders. A soul that had caught, as Jesus

had, the spirit of the great prophets of old could not but be revolted by the crudities of current apocalypse. There may be a reference to their pseudonymity and vindictiveness in, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."

It will be interesting in this connection to consider Jesus' estimate of the relation of the new to the old in his own work. We have it in Matt xiii. 52:—

"Therefore every scribe who hath been made a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like unto a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."

The new things of a householder's store are the things a man lives on, his necessary food: the old things are the glories and dignities of life, robes, rings and old wine, and also tools, the means for manipulating the new effectively. Without the old you are poor: without the new you die. The old and the new are the capital and labour of religion.

This sense of the necessity of the new (despite its partial dependence on the old) appears in "Give us day by day our daily bread." We live physically and spiritually by daily renewal, which is a daily gift.

One more parable falls to be considered here, the parable of the unjust steward (Luke xvi. 1 ff.), which

is peculiarly interesting in the matter of appended interpretations:—

1 And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. 2 And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. 3 Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. 4 I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. 5 So he called every one of his lord's debtors *unto him*, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? 6 And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. 7 Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. 8 And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. 9 And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when it shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting tabernacles. 10 He

that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

Verse 9 offers itself as the interpretation of the parable, on the figures of which it is framed. It is strange in both language and thought, and is itself in need of interpretation. Does it mean, Give alms and so secure a place in heaven, or does it mean that the best use of wealth is to create fellowship that will outlast it? But these difficulties are small compared with those created by its position. Its emphatic "And I say unto you" implies that these are Jesus' own words following the cited words of some other, i.e., that "the lord" of v. 8 (the Greek has no "his" as in the R.V., though the word might be understood) is the rich man of the parable and that the whole of the verse represents his judgment on his steward's action.

But it is more than difficult to take v. 8 as giving the rich man's mind. The success of the steward's trick depended entirely on its being kept secret from his lord: otherwise its cleverness vanishes. So that if his lord knew of it, there would be little cleverness to commend. In any case, it is quite impossible to think that the rich man's reason for commending the steward was "because the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." This is evidently not the rich man speaking,

but someone commenting upon the parable as a whole. And yet it cannot be the speaker of the next verse beginning, "And I say unto you." We are driven to the conclusion that "the lord" of v. 8 originally meant Jesus (as in Luke xviii. 6) and that the verse was added by a narrator of the parable to give what he considered to be the mind of Jesus upon the story; and we have further to conclude that the author of v. 9 mistook "the lord" of v. 8 to be the rich man, and added another application, which either he or a subsequent editor attributed to Jesus.

The question then arises as to whether the author of v. 8 was right in his estimate of Jesus' mind. It is very difficult to think that Jesus commended the sort of wisdom that the steward shewed, or told this story of the fraudulent misuse of a monetary trust as an example of the conduct desirable in spiritual matters. And there is evidence that Jesus did not think at all highly of the wisdom of "the children of this world": they were weatherwise, but no more (Luke xii. 56): their type was the prodigal who wasted all or the rich fool who lost all by sinking enjoyment in postponement.

It is very difficult to think that the story was told as an example of wisdom or prudence. The steward's knavery was not extraordinary in its astuteness: it is a proverb that "men cut broad thongs from other men's leather." He would at

best secure only a temporary postponement of destitution (as is suggested by the author of v. 9, with his contrasted "eternal tabernacles") for hospitality so gained does not last long. The very decisiveness of his action (which Jülicher thinks its laudable element) was the decisiveness of desperation. And as for prudence, surely a dishonestly prudent man would have feathered his own nest at his lord's expense instead of merely "wasting his goods," while an honestly prudent man would have retained his position; so that with any sort of efficient prudence the steward would not have found himself faced with destitution.

We also note that if these two commendatory verses (8 and 9), which seem to come from narrator or editor, are removed, we come to a verse (10) in which such action as the steward's is condemned. This verse stresses the need for being faithful in little and thus has nothing to do with the wealth which is the interest of the whole of this chapter: its position cannot therefore be due to the evangelist, while its condemnation of such action as the steward's shows that its position cannot be due to whoever were responsible for vv. 8 and 9. It has therefore some claim on this ground to original association with the parable. It describes exactly the steward's action. The disloyalty of his carelessness and neglect resulting in the wasting of his lord's goods, was a minor

form of dishonesty which drove him by its own consequences to positive fraud—"he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." In this sense the parable might have a very wide application, but not one that would do justice to the main point of the story—the way in which the steward tried to secure his own safety and comfort at the expense of his trust.

Have we any indication of the original application of this point? It describes those whose position had been rendered precarious by their inattention to the interest of that which had been entrusted to them, and who in order to secure their position had, by an ostensibly liberal but dishonest use of their trust, succeeded in currying favour with those who were willing for a time to maintain them in a position of ease and dignity. And as far as we know, there was only one set of people in Palestine at the time of Jesus, who answered to this description—the high priests, i.e., the present and past holders of that office, who with their family connections formed a small but powerful section of the community. The high priestly office was held by appointment of Rome and therefore they were inclined to barter the national ideal and the interests of a spiritual trust in order to get Roman favour and secure themselves in an office which their character would have otherwise lost for them. In John xix. 15, it is the

high priests that cry, "We have no king but Cæsar."

This Roman tendency would create a peculiar situation for Jesus. His anti-nationalist attitude had roused opposition, and he brought this opposition to an issue in Jerusalem by cleansing the court of the Gentiles, thus giving a direct challenge to the high priestly authority which they were not slow to take up. But it would be in all men's minds, What does this prophet, with his vindication of Gentile rights in the Temple, think of the high priests and their cultivation of Roman friendship? The parable would answer, This apparent liberality is really the betrayal of a trust for self-ends.

That this was the occasion and aim of the parable is confirmed by the two verses immediately following, which fit this situation exactly, but seem to fit no other:—

11 If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true *riches*? 12 And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

If these sayings were uttered with regard to the religious authority of the high priests when Jesus evicted the traffic by which they were making gain through their abuse of the court of the Gentiles, then we feel their edge. If these priests have

abused the financial trust of their position, who will credit them with spiritual authority? If they have made a dishonest use of what God intended to be a place where the Gentiles might worship him, what of God can they claim to have in themselves?

The severe indictment of these verses follows fitly upon the half-pitying, half-contemptuous picture which the parable gives of the political astuteness of the high priestly party, a picture otherwise universally applicable to the time-serving politician.

This parable follows immediately upon that of the prodigal. There the elder brother gives us the spirit of scribe and Pharisee: here the fraudulent steward stands for Jesus' judgment upon the high priests. And these were the two classes that combined to kill him.

CHAPTER VII

PARABLES OF VINDICATION

CERTAIN of Jesus' parables were spoken to vindicate his conduct when critics challenged it, or when it needed explanation or justification to his disciples or the multitude. We shall consider first those parables the occasion of which we know, and shall begin with that of the two debtors (Lk. vii. 41, 42) which cannot be separated from the story of which it is part:—

36 And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. 37 And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that *Jesus* sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, 38 And stood at his feet behind *him* weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe *them* with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed *them* with the ointment. 39 Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw *it*, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman *this is* that

toucheth him: for she is a sinner. 40 And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. 41 There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. 42 And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? 43 Simon answered and said, I suppose that *he*, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. 44 And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped *them* with the hairs of her head. 45 Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. 46 My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but she hath anointed my feet with ointment. 47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loveth little. 48 And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. 49 And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? 50 And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

We have here a characteristic use of the parable—

Nathan's use of it—to engage a man to self-condemnation.

The occasion is a clash of estimates: the woman apprehends in Jesus one in whom the purity and love of God arrest her life: the Pharisee sees nothing in her but a sinner whose presence is evidence of the spiritual obtuseness of Jesus. The difference of these estimates is to Jesus evidence of a different relationship to God. Simon's uncharity is evidence that he knows nothing of God's forgiveness. Jesus assumes that the love concomitant with the experience of being forgiven by God will be directed to man, which is, of course, involved in the saying, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." And we should probably understand Jesus' complaint, "Thou gavest me no water for my feet . . ." as implying on Simon's part not lack of manners but lack of love.

It is clear that when Jesus speaks of being forgiven much or little, he has in mind not God's measure of a man's sin but the man's own sense of it; but the more we love God, the more we shall feel the greatness and hatefulness of our sin. So that a sense of the love of God is an initial factor, not merely a result, of forgiveness. We not only love because we are forgiven, but we repent and are forgiven because we love—"Her sins which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven,

the same loveth little," which says to Simon, "Because you see nothing to love here, you know nothing of God's love."

In Mark ii. 16, 17 we read:—

16 And when the scribes of the Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth with publicans and sinners? 17 When Jesus heard *it*, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

It is difficult to determine whether Jesus' defence was complimentary or satirical. Its interest is that it gives us his conception of holiness in sharp contrast to that of the scribes and Pharisees. To them it was a thing to be conserved and carefully guarded from contamination: to him it was an invasive goodness, whose redemptive quality needed opportunity not protection.

The parable of the sons of the bridechamber and those of the patch and wine-skin also are Jesus' vindication of his and his followers' conduct, but the first has already been considered, and the last two have a more important connection.

Matt. vii. 6 is interesting as being a verse of

Hebrew poetry with its members corresponding in the order a b b a, the swine trampling and the dogs rending :—

6 Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and rend you.

We have already seen that the suggestion of harshness here comes from the common tendency to take parables for allegories; and it is probable that the swine and dogs appear not so much for their Mosaic uncleanness as for their voracity.

The saying warns us against imparting to others that which is holy or precious to us, but is so far from their appetite and interests that our impartation will only irritate them into misusing the gift and attacking the giver. On this maxim Jesus acted when, after Peter had confessed, Thou art the Christ, he "charged them that they should tell no man of him" (Mark viii. 29, 30). Again he acted on it, when he said to his questioners, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things (Mk. xi. 33), and when he kept silence before the Sanhedrin and Pilate.

A different aspect of the need for concealment is given in the parable of the hidden treasure (Matt. xiii. 44):—

44 The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he

hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

The peculiar interest of the story is that the finder was under necessity of hiding the treasure, if he was ever to possess it: let the secret get out, and not all he had would make the field and its treasure his. No explanation of the parable that does not do justice to this, its outstanding feature, has any right to be considered. But the applications of the saying last dealt with remind us that this parable can be applied directly to the conditions under which Jesus had to work. It had, however, special aptitude to what we have seen to be Jesus' ideal for his people—that they should lead the world into God's kingdom by teaching it to know the true God; for we saw that this hope, if it was ever to be realized, must for a time be hidden.

A saying of somewhat similar import to the parable of the hidden treasure appears in several forms. Mark (iv. 22) gives it prefaced by another saying as follows:—

21 And he said unto them, Is a lamp brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a lampstand? 22 For there is nothing hid, save that it should be manifested; neither was any thing made secret, but that it should come to light.

Verse 22 is in itself clear: such things as were

ordinarily hidden—treasure, weapons and so forth—were hidden in order that they might come to light at the effective moment. But this seems to have nothing to do either with the figure or significance of v. 21: men do not hide lamps, and the saying about them is a protest against any hiding of the thing it signifies. Mark therefore does not seem to have the saying of v. 22 in its original context.

Matthew's version and setting of the saying is (x. 25b-27):—

25b If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more *shall they call* them of his household? 26 Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. 27 What I tell you in darkness, *that* speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, *that* preach ye upon the housetops.

But the setting here is no happier than Mark's. You may arm a man against slander by reminding him that in the nature of things the hidden will be revealed; but this assertion that the truth will take care of itself, yields no strong incentive to become a proclaimer of hidden truth.

Luke has the saying twice, once (viii. 17) as taken over from Mark, and again (xii. 1-3), in form which seems to come from the same source as Matthew's version :—

1 In the mean time, when there were gathered

together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. 2 For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. 3 Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.

The statement that "there is nothing hid, that shall not be known" is certainly an antidote to hypocrisy, but apart from belief in the last judgment, such a statement would not carry very definite consent. And the other and parallel member of this compound saying, with its reference to proclamation from the housetops, makes it clear that the last judgment is not here in mind. We notice, however, that the Marcan form of the first half, with its appeal to human habit, fits the second half of the Lucan saying better than the latter's present preface:—

For there is nothing hid but that it should be manifested; neither was any thing made secret, but that it should come to light (Mark iv. 22).

Wherefore whatsoever ye have said in the darkness, shall be heard in the light; and what ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops (Luke xii. 3).

This is probably as near as we can get to the

original form, but the original occasion of the saying does not appear to have been preserved. It is probable however that it ranks beside the parable of the hidden treasure as Jesus' vindication of his own action. It would have more especial application to the secret of Jesus' Messiahship. Like the hidden weapon or money, this truth was hidden that it might be available when it could be effectively used. But that was not the whole truth of it: hence the second half of the saying, in which Jesus reminds his hearers that, in all human life, it is the secret understandings that control public policies, it is life's secrets that shape life. So the secret of his Messiahship should not lie in his disciples' mind like buried treasure, but should be the formative power in their lives shaping them until they should be its mouthpiece to the world.

Next to the parable of the hidden treasure Matt. (xiii. 45, 46) places the parable of the pearl of great price:—

45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: 46 Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

The inadequacy of the traditional method of interpretation is seen when so able a commentator as Dr. H. B. Swete (*The Parables of the Kingdom*,

pp. 50, 51) has to confess, "The parable, if we may press it, suggests that the pearl merchant actually parts with all his other pearls to gain this one. In the case of the kingdom of heaven there is usually no such necessity." The parable needs no pressing in this direction: it is the very point of the story, and the method stands self-condemned which has to confess that the point of the story is hardly ever applicable to that which it was told to illustrate.

The point of the story is clear. The man is a merchant, not a dilettante, and he finds that his business with pearls in general demands that he shall concentrate upon one. He must sell all his other stock in order to possess his find; but this rarest of all pearls will bring profit that will make him master of much more than he has sacrificed for it. It is the story of a sound piece of business—concentration for the sake of ultimate expansion not to be otherwise achieved.

And it has immediate application to one of the most important, striking and puzzling features of Jesus' work—that, with sympathies and aim wide as the world, he confined his work and the immediate work of his disciples to Israel. The parable gives the one likely and tolerable explanation—it was concentration in the interests of extension. He must, at all cost to his wider sympathies, limit himself to Israel, for otherwise, as we have seen, he could not

hope to win Israel; but having gained Israel, he could through Israel gain the world.

When Jesus sent out the twelve, he said to them, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not" (Matt. x. 5), an instruction which would have been unnecessary unless they were otherwise likely to suppose that he had a wider intent, as they might well have done from his frequent reference to the Gentiles and his praise of Gentile faith, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." At such a moment the explanation given in the parable would be apt.

If the parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price had the meaning suggested here, they were spoken to the disciples, not to the people, and they are placed by Matthew, who alone gives them, together with the parable of the drag-net (which seems to have concerned the peculiar demands of discipleship) in a position which indicates that they were spoken to the disciples in private, and not, like the parables of the tares, mustard seed and leaven, to the multitude; and this difference was probably due to his source, for he interprets the drag-net as meaning precisely the same as the tares.

This aspect of Jesus' work leads us to consider the parabolic saying that forms part of the story of the Syrophenician woman as given in Mark vii. 24-30:—

24 And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know *it:* but he could not be hid. 25 For forthwith a woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet: 26 The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. 27 But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast *it* unto the dogs. 28 And she answered and saith unto him, Yes, Lord: and the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. 29 And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter. 30 And when she was come to her house, she found her daughter laid upon the bed, and the devil gone out.

The woman's importunity shows that she knew enough of Jesus to expect help, and, since he was trying to remain unknown, her information must have come from Galilee, and if so, it probably included some knowledge of how this Jewish prophet had come to leave Jewish territory.

The opposition had risen to such a pitch that it was no longer possible for Jesus to work in Galilee, and Galilee was still unrepentant. "Tyre and Sidon," Jesus cried, "would have repented long

ago," and he was now driven from Galilee and finds himself " in the borders of Tyre and Sidon." This Gentile's appeal must have come as a temptation to leave Israel and find among the Gentiles an easier way of doing good, and he answers, " It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it unto the dogs." It seems a harsh answer until we see its irony in the fact that the " children " had cast him from them, and he was finding safety among the " dogs." The woman seems to have known that he was a fugitive prophet, for she answers, Just so, the dogs under the table get what the children count worthless. If we do not understand the woman's reply in this sense, it is hard to see why she speaks of the *children's* crumbs; her reply would have been to the form, but not to the sense, of Jesus' words; for he had said that what was entrusted to him for a privileged people must not be given to others, so that there could be no " crumbs " here except what the " children " had cast away. His rejoinder, " For this saying go thy way . . . " suggests that in that time of disappointment the woman's words brought him the comforting thought that, though rejected by Israel, he might, not merely despite but even by means of, that rejection, be of avail for the help of the wider world. This was probably a comfort that he could not give himself, for Israel's rejection of him was not yet final and complete, and therefore he

could not act or think on the assumption that it would be so, without himself contributing to the result; so that the black possibility must have remained a comfortless pain until the event, had not this woman's word suggested a hope, even if the worst should happen.

Two other parables seem to find their application in the exigencies of the conflict which Jesus' work brought upon him. We have seen that the story of the ten virgins appears originally to have ended with the entry of the five wise ones into the marriage, and that the interpretation given in Matt. xxv. does violence to the story and is not supported by it.

The story culminates in the wise virgins' reason for not sharing their oil with the foolish ones, "Peradventure there will not be enough for us and for you." This seems at first sight more churlish than wise; so that we may surmise that the parable was told to supply defence for some course of action that needed defending. The wise virgins' defence is, "If we give to you, it will not help you, for we shall all run short and miss the wedding; but a very much more important thing is that the duty for which we are all here will not be done at all, and the bridegroom will be left unwelcomed and dishonoured."

The parable shows that sometimes an act which

looks like poor comradeship is more than justified, that there are circumstances where fellowship of a certain sort must give way to something higher and where a compromise which might conserve the fellowship would be disloyalty to accepted duty and would lose the higher good for all. And we know that Jesus found himself in such a position and felt the strain of it.

51 Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: 52 For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three (Luke xii.).

When he found that he was thus splitting the nation, the question would arise, Why not compromise for the sake of unity? And the parable would answer, To compromise would not help those who hang back: the only result would be that all would miss the opportunity of the time; and something greater is at stake than both parties put together.

We have also seen that the parable of the friend at midnight will hardly bear the interpretation which Luke by his placing puts upon it. Taken by itself, the point of the story is that a man may be right to use in the interests of another a pressure of importunity that would be unseemly if used on his own behalf. He is justified in straining one fellow-

ship for the sake of the more urgent call of another. Any eastern audience would applaud the petitioner for hammering at his friend's door until he got what he wanted to enable him to meet the sacred demands of hospitality arising from the unexpected arrival of his guest.

And more than once the urgencies of Jesus' task and the nature of its difficulties placed him in a position where, without apparently ungracious treatment of some, he must betray the highest and most sacred duty to others. He has been blamed for his sharpness of speech to scribe and Pharisee, but when we know (Matt. xxiii. 13, Luke xi. 52) that he found their influence was keeping the people from the kingdom of God, then we see that for the sake of his people and of God he had no choice but to do everything to break that influence. And again his reverence for freedom and avoidance of anything that savoured of compulsion make it strange that he cleansed the Temple court as he did, and by the importunity of his presence practically compelled the authorities either to acknowledge or to kill him. But their influence was his chief hindrance in the work of God, and his action in this way was calculated to cancel it by making them either accept reform at his initiative or kill him, whom the people counted a prophet, for doing an indubitably right act. The soul not only of Israel but of the larger

world was at stake, as was evident by his chosen point of challenge—the restoration to its right use of the court of the Gentiles; which possibly is hinted at in the parable, "A friend of mine is come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him"; for, as we have seen in the parable of the mustard seed, Jesus uses the oriental virtue of hospitality to ease the way for Israel's recognition of a religious duty to the Gentiles.

The gist of this parable has also something to say with regard to an aspect of Jesus' use of parables. For while recognizing their power in controversy and the adroitness with which they allure the opponent to self-condemnation, we may ask whether a less pointed way would not have been more conciliatory. We need to remember, as just pointed out, that much more was at stake than the conciliation of the opponent, and also that these very pointed parables were generally a reply to a public challenge offered by his opponents with the express purpose of discrediting him before the people. They were phases of a war between Jesus and his opponents for the soul of his people.

What seems to have been the original intent of the parable of the sower places it amongst those by which Jesus vindicated his own methods. Taking the parable by itself (see p. 20 f.), it celebrates the

abundant productiveness of successful growth as far outweighing the worst that all causes of failure can do, many though they may be. It sets before us the life that protects itself by self-productiveness. The wheat is easily swallowed, starved, stifled, yet its power of multiplying makes these mischances negligible, wins the co-operation of the sower and gloriously crowns his labour.

There can be little doubt that the parable touches on the fate of God's truth in the heart of man. And when we see that it contrasts the manifold possibility of loss with a productiveness which more than justifies the risk, and that its central emphasis is on life that secures its survival by self-propagation rather than by self-protection, it is hard to avoid concluding that we have here Jesus' defence of his desire that God's truth should have its free chance in all ears, as against the general spirit of Judaism which sought to conserve a holy life and a divine revelation by separateness and exclusiveness. It is Jesus' vindication of his free appeal to conscience and reason as against the appeal to authority and precedent, and his insistence upon life-giving contact as against protective segregation. He allows that there are risks, many of them, but the losses are casual and accidental, and the capacity of God's truth for rooting itself and bearing fruit in the human heart makes the losses insignificant.

There is evidence [1] for thinking that this parable was spoken at the gathering on the eastern side of the lake described twice in Mark (vi. 32 ff., viii. 1 ff.). That the multitude had been with him three days (Mk. viii. 2) indicates, not a promiscuous gathering, but a prearranged conference; and since it followed hard upon the return of the twelve from their mission (vi. 30) and consisted of people "from all the cities" (vi. 33), some of whom were "from afar" (viii. 3), it was probably a gathering of those who were moved by the message of the twelve and wanted to know more of their master and his teaching. Now the mission of the twelve and this gathering in the wilderness were measures by which Jesus met the growing opposition to his work, an opposition the ground of which lay in the contrasted ideas of dealing with God's truth as set forth by the parable of the sower. The opposition had been roused by Jesus' condemnation of certain things, and these things—Sabbath strictness, ritual ideas of clean and unclean, aloofness from publican, sinner and Gentile—were all cherished by the desire to conserve by segregation and exclusiveness. Hence to the gathering with which Jesus answered the opposition it was needful to vindicate the faith that had roused it, and in the

[1] According to Mark iv, on the evening of the day on which this parable was spoken, Jesus took ship for the other side. The time and company make it likely that this voyage was from the eastern side home; and the stilling of the storm suggests that it is a variant of that told in vi. 48ff.

parable of the sower we have its vindication, a vindication made triumphant by the presence of thousands as the fruit borne by the truth sown in the hearts of the twelve.

The parable of the sower, the saying, " Do men gather figs from thistles ? . . . " and the parable of the leaven, thus touch, each from a different angle, the reproductive power of God's truth.

We saw that the interpretation appended to the parable of the tares did not commend itself as authentic. Nor is the usual application to Church discipline more satisfactory, for the Church has never hesitated to expel unworthy members: its difficulty has been how to recognize the truly unworthy, whereas the difficulty in the parable was not how to recognize the evil intruders, but how to deal with them.

The point of the story evidently is in the owner's decision and his reason, " Nay, lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. . . . " It is possible to consider the parable as an answer to the question, " Why so much evil in the world of a good God ? " It would suggest that God did not originate the evil—" an enemy hath done this "—but that he allows it because he could not eliminate the evil without destroying the good also. If mankind could be divided into one class wholly good and an-

other wholly bad, it would be possible for God to divide them; the removal of the evil would not root out the good. But mankind is not so divided: there is evil in all: it infects the individual will, and could be removed by external power only at the cost of removing the freedom that makes human good possible. Such an application is not out of the range of such questions of providence as Jesus touches on in Luke xiii. 1 ff.

But there are difficulties in this application. It is not God's will that good and evil should grow together in the soul. And the transference of judgment from the story to God's providence would not be easy. It would turn on a conception of the implications of human freedom hardly to be taken for granted in any audience of that day, and which, had it already been canvassed, would have made the parable unnecessary.

If we cannot apply it to the providence of God it probably had its occasion in the concrete conditions of Jesus' work. And here it has a very apt point of contact in the presence of the traitor amongst the twelve. It is highly probable that Jesus could not have dismissed him except on grounds that would have taken others with him. The ambitions whose threatened frustration moved Judas to treachery were shared by the twelve. Had Jesus expelled Judas, it would have confirmed the suspicion and

fear of the others before they had seen, as they did not till after Jesus' death, all that was involved in the difference between man's glory and God's. We probably do not appreciate the strain which events put upon the loyalty of the twelve: the wonder is not that Judas fell away, but that others did not. Jesus seems to have recognized that Peter, James and John were reliable, but unless in some of the rest there was something like that which moved Judas, what was the point of saying, " One of you shall betray me ? " The growing disaffection of Judas was doubtless seen by the rest: some would sympathize with its grounds, whatever they might afterwards think of its conclusions. If others, as was probable, wanted to know why he was allowed to remain, the parable would be their answer. It said what could not be said directly, and those to whom Jesus spoke would probably feel the force of his argument without seeing all that was involved in it. And the parable which vindicated the wisdom of Jesus' decision was itself vindicated by the event. The harvest of that history, when the heart of Judas and the heart of Jesus bore each its fruit, saw the separation made—Judas " went to his own place " and the eleven began a new era of the world's life.

CHAPTER VIII

PARABLES OF CRISIS AND OPPORTUNITY

We have seen that the parable of the road to judgment reflected the historic situation as between Israel and the powers of the world. Unless Israel "gave diligence" to clear its own soul as to what it owed to the world, the time for doing so would speedily pass and then "the uttermost farthing" must be paid in pain and bondage. This was Jesus' counterpart of John's "Even now is the axe laid unto the root of the trees."

To the same situation apparently belongs the parable of the returning demon (Matt. xii. 43 ff., Luke xi. 24 ff.). Matthew's version is:—

43 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through waterless places, seeking rest, and findeth none. 44 Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth *it* empty, swept, and garnished. 45 Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

Matthew places it with a series of strictures upon the nation and adds that it applies " unto this wicked generation," which, whether authentic or not, seems to be correct.

Israel had been profoundly moved by the preaching of John, and Mark tells us that the people as a whole had gone to his baptism, confessing their sins (Mark i. 5). But this repentance had been only a turning from the old wrong: no positive new enthusiasm had filled the heart. Especially was this true of Israel as a nation. John could show the folly of saying, We have Abraham to our father, but, he could give patriotism no wholesome spiritual ambition with which to replace the old boast. And Jesus saw the dangerous weakness of this state: if the nation, by refusing his positive lead, tried to maintain the purity of an empty heart, its last estate would be worse than the first. The parable might have been a reply to those who said, We followed John, and you acknowledge that to be good: let us be content with that: why do you want us to go further? Jesus' answer is, Because without going on, you will lose more than you have gained through John; as in the case of the sometime obsessed, a negative attitude invites an aggravated relapse. Luke is probably correct in appending this parable to the saying, " He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth."

These two parables of the road to judgment and the returning demon give Jesus' judgment as to the perils inherent in the historic situation of his day. The parable of the growing corn (Mark iv. 26-29) gives the other side of peril—opportunity:—

26 And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; 27 And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed springeth and groweth up, he knoweth not how. 28 The earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. 29 But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.

There can be no reasonable doubt as to the main point of the parable. It is the co-operation of man with the mysterious powers of nature : both factors are emphasized unmistakably—" the seed springs and grows up, he knoweth not how," " the earth bringing forth fruit of herself "; yet it is man who " cast the seed into the ground " and at the right moment " immediately putteth forth the sickle." Man knows little, but he knows when and how to act, and this is as necessary as nature's power of bringing to ripeness.

If the parable has any contact with the work of Jesus, it must be in the man's part, sowing or reaping. But if the former, it would imply that Jesus was in

or about to pass into, a time of inactivity. This makes it more likely that the point of contact is the harvest, and Jülicher (*op. cit.* ii. 541) draws attention to the solemn terms in which the harvesting is described.

That Jesus regarded his time as a harvest time, we know from the saying, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the lord of the harvest, that he send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matt. ix. 37 f., Luke x. 2). And the harvest that stands at the consummation of a parable of the kingdom of God is surely the same as that of which God is "lord of the harvest." In both the saying and the parable stress is laid upon the co-operation of man with powers not his own, and upon the critical importance of his part.

The parable would be an answer to questions that must surely have been raised wherever Jesus went with the cry, "The kingdom of God is at hand." His hearers would ask, How do you know? Why all this urgency just now? Why did you not begin before? Why wait so long and then be so urgent? And the parable would answer, How does the farmer know when to put in the sickle? Why does he wait so long and then so bestir himself? Like the farmer, Jesus relies on a seen ripeness: things had grown to it in himself and Israel. And the earlier elements of the parable hint that because the powers with which

man co-operates in the kingdom of God are the powers of divine life in the universe, the great moment of God's kingdom comes like the harvest—a slow, mysterious process that suddenly presents itself as a great opportunity calling urgently for man to do his part.

This assurance of the presence of the kingdom of God in the picture of a now ripened harvest reminds us of the same assurance differently expressed in the parable of the divided house and the strong man.

According to Mark, the parable of the growing corn was spoken at the same time as that of the sower. If so, and if the suggestion made with regard to the occasion of the latter may be accepted, then the parable of the growing corn was spoken to thousands gathered by the message of the twelve, "The kingdom of God is at hand" (Matt. x. 7, cf. Luke x. 9) and would answer their natural questioning.

Mark also connects with this occasion the parable of the mustard seed, which, as we have seen, gives Jesus' ideal for his people—that the unique development of its religion should be crowned by extending the hospitality of its truth to alien life. This would accord with the culminating utterance of the Sermon on the Mount, that if they were to be truly children of God, they must learn from his magnanimity to love their enemies and do them good.

Parables of Crisis and Opportunity

Another pronouncement of Jesus upon his relation to the historic conditions of his day is given in the parables of the patch and of the wine-skin. They are placed (Mark ii. 21, 22) after the parable of the sons of the bridechamber, in which Jesus answered the question as to why his disciples did not fast. They cannot be regarded as additional answers to this question for they speak of something that should never be done at all:—

21 No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the piece that filled it up taketh away from it, the new from the old, and the rent is made worse. 22 And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the wine will burst the bottles, and the wine is destroyed, and the bottles: but new wine must be put into new bottles.

Both parables tell us that, for the good of both the old and the new, they must be kept apart. There can be little doubt that the new stands for the spirit and teaching of Jesus, but what does he mean by the old? It cannot have been the Pharisaic ideal and ways, because Jesus was not concerned to conserve these. Nor can it have been the older Hebrew religion as a whole, for he would not have stated his relation to the past of his people in such terms of incompatibility. Probably Matthew gives us a clue by his statement (ix. 14) that Jesus was here speaking to the disciples of John. A comparison of the three

Gospels makes it probable that these two parables were not only in Mark but also in Q, and the prominence given to John's disciples in Luke v. 33 suggests that Matt. ix. 14 represents Q's introduction to the passage, so that we may take the parables as being Jesus' statement of the relation of his work to the work of John. They would explain why, despite his baptism by John and his great reverence for John, he did not co-operate with him, but waited till John was imprisoned and then made an independent beginning.

If Jesus had tried to make good the weak places in John's work, it would only have dissipated his own endeavour and weakened John's, and an attempt at still closer union would have wrecked both. For the outstanding differences between Jesus and John were two. John kept within the limits of the Mosaic law, and, as far as we know, of the tradition also. The orthodoxy of Jesus was questioned: John's was not: from their own accepted standpoint John wrought upon the consciences of the people and moved them profoundly. The introduction of the new things of Jesus would have crippled his influence. On the other hand the disturbing newness of Jesus' view of the Law was bound up with his ideal of Israel as the light of the nations and therefore with the proclamation of opportunity, "The kingdom of God is at hand," which he set over against John's

warning of doom: to compromise on the law would have been to sell his hope. So that for the sake of both, and of the one great end before both, John's work must be allowed to run its full course independently, and only then could Jesus effectively take the lead into new ways.

These two parables are evidence that Jesus recognized the newness of what he brought to men, and if we take them as relating his work to John's and set them beside his verdict, " I say unto you, among them that are born of women there is none greater than John " (Luke vii. 28, Matt xi. 11), we have a measure of this newness as the mind of Jesus saw it.

We have another aspect of the same relationship, and one in which history often repeats itself, in Jesus' citation of the psalm (Mark xii. 10, 11):—

10 And have ye not read this scripture: The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: 11 This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes ?

The experts reject that which afterwards proves to be the beginning of a new era in their department. Jesus' application of this to himself again shows his awareness of the importance of what was new in his message and in himself.

Matt. (xvii. 24 ff.) preserves a parable which shows

that Jesus recognized a fundamental contradiction between his teaching of the fatherhood of God and the compulsion involved in the Jewish type of religious nationalism. The occasion was that those in charge of collecting the annual temple-tax payable by all adult males asked Peter, Doth not your teacher pay the half-shekel? probably implying by their question that it was doubtful whether Jesus, with his anti-nationalist teaching and his eating with publicans, had not renounced his right to be reckoned amongst the children of Israel. Peter answered that Jesus would pay. Then we read :—

25b And when he was come into the house, Jesus spake first unto him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers? 26 Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.

Jesus' comment is that, by this compulsory tax, which reflected their insistence upon religious nationalism, the Jews implied that God might be effectively served as though he were a power foreign to human life, and that they thus renounced the right to call themselves children of God. He connects the fatherhood of God with a religion too great for national limits and too inward for any form of compulsion.

The only passage in the Fourth Gospel which

gives us a parable of the sort found in the first three Gospels confirms the judgment of the parable just considered, as to the inwardness of religious authority. In John x. 1-5, we read:—

1 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. 2 But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 To him the porter openeth, and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. 4 When he hath put forth all his own, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. 5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.

This has unwarrantably been called an allegory: it does not lend itself to allegorical interpretation, as we may see by asking, Who is the shepherd as distinct from the porter, and who is the porter as distinct from the sheep? It stands in obvious contrast to the allegorical passage which begins with v. 7. It is a self-consistent picture drawing from us more than once the judgment that the power to evoke inward and spontaneous response is the mark and evidence of genuine authority.

When the nationalist elements in Judaism refused the destiny to which Jesus would win them and arrayed themselves against him, he was driven to

bolder language. When they refused to make the Temple—the centre and symbol of their national religion—a house of prayer for all nations, he saw that they were committing it to destruction, and Judaism to sterility, and that what he could do for the world must be done in spite of Judaism not through it. The saying in which this was embodied survives in several forms. What was said at his trial is probably best given by Matthew (xxvi.61),[1] "This man said, I am able to destroy the Temple of God, and to build it in three days." But as the witnesses would want to make the worst of it, we should probably regard John's version (ii. 19), "Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up," as giving the more authentic form. It declares that his opponents were devoting the national life of Israel to destruction, and evinces the astonishing consciousness that it lay with him to give a new centre to the religion of mankind.

Jesus was evidently conscious that he stood at the crisis of the world's religious history. To the sayings just considered we may add others like, "A greater thing than Jonah is here," "A greater thing than Solomon is here," "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see, for I say unto you

[1] See B. W. Bacon, *The Beginnings of the Gospel Story*, p. 211, J. Weiss, *Das älteste Evangelium*, p. 133, E. Klostermann, *Das Markusevengelium*, p. 173. See also J. C. Hawkins, *Horae Synoptica*, pp. 152 f.

that many prophets and kings have desired to see the things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear the things which ye hear, and have not heard them." Unlike John he never hints of one greater than himself to come after him. Historically he stands at the point where the greatest and purest of national religions passed into the greatest of all religions for man as man, and he was himself the ferment and fire that wrought the change. And in considering the parables and sayings that touch upon the historic situation, we have found them intimately bound up with Jesus' consciousness of his own unique place in this unique crisis of history.

This therefore seems to be the place to consider a small group of parables in which Jesus proposes himself as the touchstone of human destiny.

We take first the parable with which the Sermon on the Mount closes, the parable of the two builders. In Matthew's version (vii. 24-27) the difference between the two is only in choice of sites; this is probably less authentic than Luke's version (vi. 47-49), where the difference is between the easier and the harder way. The latter runs as follows :—

46 And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? 47 Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: 48 He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and

laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was well builded. 49 But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.

Jesus' picture of his true follower is not like that of the youth in Longfellow's " Excelsior " seeking the perilously high, but that of a man determined to get to the reliable.

It is necessary to note that both men are hearers who consent to what they hear: the man who neither hears nor does has no place in the picture. The weakness of the one man is that he does not bring his acts up to the affirmations of his soul as discovered in the contemplation of Jesus' truth. Thus he creates an unfoundedness of soul that will be most disastrously discovered just when solidity is most needed.

The parable implies that what Jesus sets before a man is that by which he is self-convicted of the deepest truth of his own being, which must thenceforth be the foundation of his activity, or he is doomed to a life that has renounced its own reality. It will be noticed that we have here, in quite different form and connection, the truth suggested by John's

parable of the Shepherd (x. 1 ff.)—that the appeal of the true teacher is to that which is innermost.

In Luke xiv. 25-33 we have two little parables and the circumstances in which they were spoken :—

25 And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, 26 If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. 27 Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. 28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have *sufficient* to finish *it*? 29 Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish *it*, all that behold *it* begin to mock him, 30 Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. 31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? 32 Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. 33 So therefore, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

It is noteworthy that Jesus refuses to take advantage of the peculiar psychological conditions of an

enthusiastic crowd. He throws his hearers back upon themselves with utterances of such startling severity that the crowd must have been atomized into thinking men and women. And then he adds two parables of occasions when it is needful to sit down and think. Verse 33 seems to have been added as explanation, and if so, it levels both parables to one meaning and one which has no very obvious connection with either, for neither is a picture of renunciation. It is probably editorial and, as Klostermann (*Das Lukasevengelium*, p. 516) suggests, not so much an explanation as a return to the demands of vv. 26, 27.

The application of the parables is clear. In the first Jesus says, Sit down and reckon whether you can afford to follow me. In the second, Sit down and reckon whether you can afford to refuse my demands. They are complementary, and when we remember what was in the cost, they are astonishing in their confidence both in himself and in the humanity to which he was appealing.

CHAPTER IX

PARABLES OF THE FUTURE

It is part of the Hebrew faith that every true prophet of the living God is committed to making a forecast of history. In so far as he believes that he speaks truly for God, he cannot but believe that the rejection of his message will prove calamitous and that the acceptance of it will bring fuller life. The degree of these results will depend on the importance of the truth concerned, while the extent to which the one or the other will take place depends upon a factor—the response of his hearers—which is out of the prophet's control and more or less out of his ken. It is not otherwise with Jesus.

Hitherto the consideration of Jesus' predictions has proceeded from two opposite and inadequate bases. The older orthodoxy attributed to him an exact foreknowledge, which he is said to have disclaimed (Mark xiii. 32), and which would remove him from the essentially human tests and burdens that come from the uncertainty of the future. And there is the modern apocalyptic school to whom for the most part Jesus is a second-rate mind overheated by second-hand dreams.

Apart from warnings such as that contained in the parable of the barren fig tree and from his more specific predictions of the destruction of Jerusalem, a review of the Gospels reveals little to be regarded as a forecast of doom except Luke xvii. 26-30 (and the parallel of a part of it in Matt. xxiv. 37-39) :—

26 And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. 27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. 28 Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot ; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded ; 29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed *them* all. 30 Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

Both these pictures tell, not merely of doom, but of doom directly connected with the withdrawal of the righteous. The reference is evidently not to Jesus himself, for they speak of withdrawal, not rejection. They probably therefore depict what Jesus foresaw would happen as a result of the nation's disregard for his truth—that his cause would draw off the sane and spiritual elements and leave the rest of the nation to move the more blindly and surely to the destruction which culminated in

A.D. 70, the imminent possibility of which both John and Jesus saw.

This suggests that the thought of Jesus, like that of all the great prophets of Israel, put the foreshadowings of history to a penetrating scrutiny.

When we consider the other side of the picture—his utterances as to what would come to his followers—we find here also a complexity and contingency that indicate a forecast based on concrete historic conditions. The complexity appears to come mainly from three factors of the situation and from their interaction.

In the first place, his followers would not only gain a fuller life as the result of their following, but, because they were committed to the reproduction of his spirit and ways, they too would be brought into collision with their fellows and would evoke opposition and suffer persecution, and their sufferings too would be powerful for good.

The second factor was that the followers of Jesus, like the Jews of his time generally, had not reached the spiritual stature at which he could safely impart to them all that was involved in his ideal of Israel as the light of the Gentiles. They must not only be shown but must appropriate an idea of God higher than that which they already possessed, must learn to love the Gentile, before they could be sent to teach the Gentile of God's

love. And it was only through the death of Jesus that they entered deeply enough into his experience of God's love to find their way, and even then only slowly, to the universality of his gospel.

An additional complication was that the concrete duty of his followers after his death would depend upon their numbers, i.e., upon the degree to which his own work ended in success or failure, so far as winning the nation was concerned. If the nation had responded to the appeal of his teaching and of his death, the future would have called for measures other than those eventually needed. Jesus' largest hope was not of a missionary few, but of a nation of God's people with its Temple "a house of prayer for all nations," and Jerusalem "the city of the great King"—the capital of the kingdom of God. His twelve would be seated on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Had the nation been won, no missionary programme would have been needed: every city of the known world was already an outpost of Israel. The Jews of the dispersion would have followed the lead of Palestine, and in less than a generation the world would have been evangelized. On the other hand, if the nation rejected him, what was to be done would depend on the unanimity or otherwise of their rejection. In any case it was not right to plan on the presumption that men would reject God's appeal: "Sufficient

unto the day is the evil thereof." Nor could the extent of the response to the appeal of his death be known beforehand. So that, apart from other considerations, the disciples must for this reason find their way for themselves after his death.

Hence even to the end he could say nothing to the twelve as to the precise nature of their duty to Gentiles. They must grow to see it for themselves through the freedom and understanding which by his death the Spirit would bring to them. What he said to them about the future could therefore stress little but the need and the way to prepare for fuller revelation, particularly the extreme need of keeping awake, alert, expectant. And because all that was involved could not be said explicitly, what he had to say to them in this respect must be largely in parables.

The two elements of persecution and the larger opportunity were intimately related to each other. So far as persecution was concerned, the simple fact of it was foretold in direct language (Mark xiii. 9-13, etc.), but its relation to the ultimate effectiveness of Jesus' truth is supported by a parable (Mark. xiii. 28, 29):—

28 But of the fig tree learn her parable ; When her branch is now become tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: 29 So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, *even* at the doors.

The point of the parable is that one series of events may be the causally connected presage of what seems to be its opposite. This point is made more obvious in a parable (which may be an adapted version of the parable of the fig tree) attributed to Jesus in the *Blickling Homilies* (cited by R. Dunkerley, *The Unwritten Gospel*, p. 166):—

" When ye see growing and blowing all the fruits of the earth, and the fragrant odors exhaling from the plants, then soon afterwards they shall dry up and dwindle away on account of the summer's heat."

Just as the tender and fresh green of the first fig leaves presages its opposite—the scorching heat of summer—the two opposites being successive phases of the one process, so Jesus bids his disciples look upon the persecutions that will come as a presage of their opposite—triumph and enlarged opportunity.

It is a matter of history that the missionary work of the early Church, and especially its ultimate recognition of a duty to the Gentiles, grew directly out of persecution and opposition. A wider work followed the persecution that began with Stephen : it was when the Jews blasphemed, that Paul said, " Lo, we turn to the Gentiles." Nor is it in itself unlikely that Jesus foresaw how it would be. Persecution, if it came at all, would come from the nationalist spirit of Judaism and would be directed

against the super-nationalist elements in the thoughts and ways of Jesus' followers. The result must either be to obliterate the distinctiveness of Jesus' following or to force his followers to become more and more conscious of these elements, and at length to see and to seize their true conclusion. The power of persecution to evoke appropriation of truth is expressed (among other things) in the beatitude, "Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. v. 10).

A more definite statement of this relationship is given in the parable of the unjust judge (Luke xviii. 1-8):—

1 And he spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; 2 Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: 3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came oft unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. 4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; 5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. 6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. 7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, and he bear long with them? 8 I tell you that he will

avenge them speedily. Howbeit when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth ?

We have seen that the introductory editorial sentence suggests an intention for the parable that is not borne out by its position or its gist. It is the conclusion of a discourse beginning " The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it " (Luke xvii. 22) and its own conclusion is, " Howbeit, when the Son of man cometh. . . ." This undoubtedly gives us the sphere of its intent.

The meaning of the passage is made difficult by two ambiguous terms. The word translated " bear long " often means " delay " (Jülicher, *op. cit.* II, 287): it denotes the opposite of a spirit driven by provocation to regrettable or premature action. Then, too, the phrase translated " speedily " often means " shortly," i.e., soon, but not at once.

Jesus is evidently speaking of conditions after his death when oppression or persecution shall make his followers long for God to vindicate them and their truth in the open ways of history. Yet God delays and may still delay, and this in spite of his sympathy with his saints' suffering. It is an evident intent of the parable to assert that God's delay is not due to callousness. " Though I fear not God, nor regard man " implies that God is interested in the oppressed. Neither his ear nor his heart is

closed to the continual cry of his saints. So that the suggestion of the parable is that God must have some good and strong reason for delay, but the parable itself leaves this reason unsuggested. We must therefore understand it as given in the closing sentence, " Howbeit, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth ? " as though here was the reason of delay—because this, and not the vindication of the saints, was the supremely important thing. This again is not very clear, but if we take the coming of the Son of man as signifying in the broadest sense the triumph of all that Jesus stood for (and we cannot do less) then it means that his triumph would miss its best part unless it found faith on earth and not merely in heaven. Jesus was not satisfied to think of a triumph which would consist of his few followers in heaven and a world ruined because it had rejected his truth. And the parable suggests that so much is demanded of the elect in patience under persecution because on that depends the permanence and spread of the faith in the world.

When we read a statement like, " If the Church had set out with the attitude which Paul was to take later it would certainly have been strangled in the cradle " (E. F. Scott, *The First Age of Christianity*, p. 118), and remember that persecution helped to produce that attitude, we see that the question

with which the parable ends contemplates a very real possibility, only to be obviated by a patient endurance that could wear down persecution. We see also the justification of Jesus' way of leaving his followers to find for themselves their duty when their hearts were ripe for it.

This understanding is confirmed and carried further by another difficult saying of the same sort, Matt. x. 23:—

23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.

The injunction is, Do not get yourselves killed off by a foolhardy attitude towards persecutions by your fellow Jews. When you are persecuted "in this city" (Jerusalem?) take refuge elsewhere. Before persecution reaches a point at which you can no longer live in the cities of Israel the Son of man will come. It should be noted that this verse contemplates no missionary activity before the coming of the Son of man: the movement advocated is merely for the sake of escape, with the suggestion that it should not be more frequent than necessary to secure that end. And if the coming of the Son of man means here the triumph of Jesus in his followers' fulfilment of Israel's destiny as light of the Gentiles, then this verse gives us the sense, and

an advance upon the sense, of the parable of the unjust judge. In this case both passages use the coming of the Son of man as it is used in Daniel vii, to symbolize God's giving to his elect a kingdom over all peoples and nations of the world.

The risk envisaged in these two passages was thus a real one. Had the early followers of Jesus succumbed to persecution either by yielding to its pressure or by foolhardy defiance of it, Judaism would all the same have suffered destruction at the hands of Rome, and in that destruction the truth of Jesus would have received a certain vindication, but there would have been no Christianity left to give faith to the world.

That "the coming of the Son of man" was opportunity rather than the end of this world is confirmed by Jesus' injunction to his disciples to watch. Watching is necessary when the action of the watchers is essential to the event: "Watch" therefore implies the oncoming of danger to be avoided or of opportunity to be seized, and the final judgment is neither of these. Had Jesus by "the coming of the Son of man" meant the day of judgment, he would surely have told his followers to redouble their call to repentance, not to stand watching. But if, as we have seen reason to think, the most important element in bringing the great opportunity of which he spoke was a changed

condition of their own hearts and minds, then it is clear how important both psychologically and spiritually this attitude of expectancy would be in maintaining the inward growth which was to contribute to such a new beginning.

Insistence on watching implies the forecast of a time not dominated by persecution. It is not necessary to tell persecuted men to keep awake. And it is, of course, not to be expected that persecution would be the unbroken lot of Jesus' followers, or that when it did come it would always be so intense as to condition all their conduct. When Jesus sent the twelve out, they "lacked nothing" (Luke xxii. 35), and their popularity lasted for some time: they had "favour with all the people" (Acts ii. 47). So that looking into the time that would follow his death, he saw that his disciples must be prepared for two differing phases of life, one of toleration and even popularity, in which the danger would be that expectancy would be lost in security, and the other a time of persecution in which they would need steadfastness both in mind and heart. Hence we have the difference between the forecast of Luke xii. 35-38, 42-46, and that of xviii. 2-8.

We have already considered Luke xviii. 2-8, but before we turn to the other side of the forecast we must take account of Luke xvii. 22-24, which mediates the transition, implying a time of neither

persecution nor ease, but of weariness. Matthew's version (xxiv. 26-28) adds a short saying which should also be considered here. In the Lucan passage we read:—

22 And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see *it*. 23 And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after *them*, nor follow *them*. 24 For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one *part* under heaven, shineth unto the other *part* under heaven ; so shall also the Son of man be in his day.

It is absurd to think that Jesus is here speaking of the end of the world: men do not need to be warned not to look in holes and corners for the last judgment. He is speaking of something about which his disciples' thought needs correction, and his correction is to tell them that it will be like the lightning, which suggests that which comes with wide and clear impressiveness, which forces itself upon you, not needing to be sought for. In this he is describing "the day of the Son of man," i.e., the future vindication of himself and his cause.

To this saying Matthew (xxiv. 28) adds, "Wheresoever the carcase is there will the vultures be gathered together." Luke also has this saying at the end of ch. xvii immediately before he resumes the theme of the coming of the Son of man in xviii.

1-8. He introduces it with the disciples' question, "Where, Lord?" which has no particular aptitude to the verse immediately preceding and should probably be understood to refer to the whole of the preceding discourse beginning with the saying about the lightning; and since all that comes between this saying and the parable of the unjust judge separates two passages more closely connected in sense with each other than with any other part of the discourse, it seems likely that Matthew's order is correct for what precedes this short saying, and Luke's for what follows it. This is important for the understanding of such a figure, which might be applied in different situations with very different results.

In Matthew's placing of it immediately after the comparison of the day of the Son of man to the lightning it has a certain poetic fitness—the lightning in the heavens obtrusive upon eyes on earth: the carcase on the earth gathering the eyes that watch from the heavens. And it seems to be the continuation and complement of the meaning. The obvious will be so only to the expectant.

And this connection does best justice to the figure. Many sorts of beasts and birds gather for garbage: the startling thing about vultures is their intent and unremitting watch, and the rapidity with which, when a beast falls, they gather from all parts of the

heavens. There is no better figure for expectant watching and immediate seizing of opportunity.

These two figures, the lightning and the vultures, tell exactly the way in which the duty and glory of taking the Gospel to the Gentiles came upon the Church: it was obvious, thrust upon them, but only the spiritually alert seized it.

The fullest forecast of the unpersecuted phase is to be found in Luke xii. 35-46:—

35 Let your loins be girded about, and *your* lamps burning ; 36 And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. 37 Blessed *are* those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. 38 And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find *them* so, blessed are those servants.

39 And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. 40 Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

41 Then Peter said, Lord, speakest thou this

parable unto us, or even to all? 42 And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom *his* lord shall make ruler over his household, to give *them their* portion of meat in due season? 43 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. 44 Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. 45 But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the men-servants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; 46 The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for *him*, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

The latter part of this is found also in Matt. xxiv. 43-51, and an abbreviated and confused conflation of the first and last of the three Lucan parables appears in Mark xiii. 34-37:—

34. For it is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. 35 Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: 36 Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. 37 And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

This Marcan passage is interesting for several reasons. It has no counterpart of the parable in Luke xii. 39, 40, yet its last verse is a counterpart of Peter's question in Luke xii. 41: this suggests that behind Luke's arrangement lay an older one in which Luke's first and third parable were separated only by Peter's question without the intervention of what is contained in vv. 39, 40. We should then have a more natural point of reference for Peter's question, "Speakest thou this parable unto us or even unto all?" which would thus refer to the lord's girding himself and serving the servants. Peter wants to know whether this is a special privilege of the twelve.

This action of the servants' lord has been challenged as an allegorizing intrusion into the parable, on the ground that no man would so act. But the action though unusual is not unnatural. The man was returning from a wedding where there was always more or less drinking of wine, and in such a state, pleased by prompt admission, he might act as the parable relates. But it should also be noted that this passage is really more of an allegory than a parable, i.e., it is rather description than argument. No judgment is asked for, and therefore it does not matter though the picture contains unlikely elements.

The whole emphasis here is upon alert expectancy

in order to render a service essential to the master's intent, a service which shall result in a signal fellowship.

Luke's third parable is an answer to Peter's question. It is a picture quite distinct from the first. And curiously enough, Mark's confused conflation of the two supplies us with a necessary item omitted by Luke. The man here is going abroad (Mark xiii. 34), not merely to a wedding. Peter's question was an angling for privilege. Jesus' answer in this parable is that privilege has peculiar temptation: the hero of this parable was faithful in a humble position, but prominence gave the temptation to which he fell. Here there is no express command to watch, which in the first parable was the chief duty of the servants; yet the right ordering of the household demands a continual sense of expectancy as the background of faithfulness: "My lord delayeth his coming," is the beginning of self-indulgence.

This picture also had its fulfilment in history. There was, in the Palestinian Church, enough freedom from persecution to make leadership a valued distinction, and if we may judge from Paul's letters, the leaders of the more Judaizing section so used their position that history "appointed them their portion with the unbelievers," for before long the section of the Church they represented ceased to exist.

The fact that these forecasts depict what actually happened should not be taken as indicating that they are prophecies first attributed to Jesus when what they presume to foretell has already happened, for they are given through a pictorial medium which the early Church showed not the slightest ability to handle. That they are instances of genuine foresight may also be seen by their limitations—the contingent nature of the future does not allow of the two sides being brought into one picture. This would have involved an assessment of their proportions, which from the nature of the case could not be given beforehand; but which a *post eventum* prophecy would certainly have included.

There are two other short parabolic sayings to be considered here, both of which seem to have been taken by the evangelists as speaking of doom but which speak much more intelligibly of opportunity.

One of these (found in Matt. xxiv. 17 and Luke xvii. 31) is given in Mark xiii. 15, 16, as follows :

15 Let him that is on the housetop not go down, neither enter to take any thing out of his house: 16 And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment.

This, in its present setting, suggests impending doom. But there is no escape from the last judgment, and the sort of action described does not seem

applicable to any natural calamity. The figure is much better fitted to describe the seizure of opportunity. It is analogous to "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." It is the picture of a man who from housetop or field sees someone he wants passing swiftly and rushes after him, not first going indoors for his finery or to the other end of the field for his coat. It speaks of an opportunity that must be seized instantly and wholeheartedly.

The second of these two sayings is given by Matthew (xxiv. 40, 41) as follows:—

40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 41 Two *women shall be* grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Luke, according to the best texts, gives it (xvii. 34, 35) as:—

34 I tell you, in that night there shall be two *men* in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. 35 Two *women* shall be grinding together: the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Luke's version has the disadvantage of depicting day-work at night. Women might grind at night, but it was not usual, and figurative speech would not mark the night with the ordinary occupations of the day. This suggests that the version of Matthew is more authentic, and that Luke's has suffered

change to bring it into line with such ideas as "The day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night" (1 Thess. v. 2).

But how are we to understand the saying? It is placed so as to suggest doom, but it is hard to get any clear indication of the sort of doom in view. The last judgment leaves none untouched. Neither war nor catastrophes of nature operate in this way. Death comes to every man in his day. We are even not sure whether the evil falls on the one taken or on the one left. And the difficulty is increased by the word translated "taken," which means "taken with" in the sense of accompanying. In fact the only sort of event of which these verses are an intelligible description seems to be that of the impressment of men and women for governmental or public service, such as is referred to in "Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain," or in the compelling of Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross. The picture of the parable thus shows us the press-gang at work: nor would compulsory service be confined to men (cf. 1 Sam. viii. 13).

If we may so understand the picture, its significance grows clear. It supplements and completes the parable of the man on the housetop, just as that of the vultures does that of the lightning. The man on the housetop saw his opportunity and ran

to it: here the opportunity seeks the man and makes its selection. The penalty of the others is that they are left, and are glad to be so: it is the parable of the drag-net over again. So we have the two sides: the man who is ready to seize the opportunity is the man the opportunity seizes: as Paul has it, "I press on, if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus."

CHAPTER X

PARABLES OF DUTY AND PERSONALITY

We come now to a group of parables that touch upon the duty of man to man and upon the nature and needs of personality. It will be noted that here too the parable is never merely illustrative: it is always something of an argument, with one or more of the characteristics already noted—emotional persuasion, argument from analogy, allurement of the hearer to self-conviction, the clothing of new or difficult thought in form more easy of assimilation than direct statement, expression of what is incapable of definition.

Moslem tradition preserves the following parable, which has every internal mark of genuineness (cited R. Dunkerley, *op. cit.*, p. 85):—

"Jesus said to the apostles, 'How would you do if you saw your brother sleeping, and the wind had lifted up his garment?' They said, 'We would cover him up.' He said, 'Nay, ye would uncover him.' They said, 'God forbid! Who would do this?' He said, 'One of you who hears a word concerning his brother, and adds to it, and relates it with additions.'"

We see the art with which the strong emotion attached by the oriental to one sort of distinction between right and wrong is carried over to reinforce a weaker but more important one.

After " The stone which the builders rejected . . ." Luke (xx. 18) adds a saying which should apparently be considered here:—

18 Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken ; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

In the position given it by Luke, it involves a mixing of metaphors quite unparalleled in the recorded utterances of Jesus. Men do not fall upon a foundation stone, nor does it fall upon them. And in this position the meaning too is as difficult, for here the stone must stand for Jesus, and the saying therefore contrasts two sorts of adverse contact with him, but does not hint at their nature, except to suggest that in both cases the victim is involved involuntarily.

In the best texts this saying is found in Luke only, where it occurs amongst material which Luke shares with Mark and Matthew. It therefore seems to be an originally independent saying placed here beside another saying about a stone, just as the saying about old wine (Luke v. 39) is placed after a quite different one about new wine.

And taken as an independent saying the meaning becomes clearer. There seems to be only one situation where a stone on which one may fall, may itself fall upon another man. In a country like Palestine, with hills of a certain steepness, it is always recognized that careless climbing may not only result in a fall dangerous to the climber, but may dislodge a stone and send it downhill with a momentum fatal to those who follow him.

If the " that " of " that stone " is authentic, the saying must originally have followed closely upon another, and would have come fittingly after the warning against stumbling. It is bad enough to be a stumbling-block to others, but a leader's carelessness about his own footing may turn a stumbling-block into a weapon of death. In any case, the figure tells us that our heedlessness, which may bring damage to ourselves, may bring more serious damage to those who follow us; and this is true whether the following is in point of time or leadership. It is a needed warning: the man who has power to lead is apt to forget that to be heedless in the consciousness of power is a selfish courage.

We owe an added debt to Luke that in preserving the parable of the good Samaritan he preserved its occasion also (Luke x. 25-37):—

25 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and

tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? 26 And he said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? 27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. 28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. 29 But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? 30 Jesus answering said, A certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his raiment, and wounded *him*, and departed, leaving *him* half dead. 31 And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked *on him*, and passed by on the other side. 33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion *on him*. 34 And went to *him*, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 And on the morrow he took out two pence, and gave *them* to the host, and said, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. 36 Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved

neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves ?
37 And he said, He that shewed mercy on him.
Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

The lawyer asks what are the limits which God sets to the love he would have man show to man. Jesus answers in the parable that love asks not for limits but for opportunity.

The gist of this parable, that true goodness, instead of sheltering itself behind conventional walls, goes out to make its own highways, is given in a different form and from a different point of view in the saying that closes Mark ix, "Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace one with another." This is the last of three sayings (or four, if we include, "And every sacrifice shall be salted with salt") which seem to have little connection with each other except the use of the same figure, "salt." The central one is found by itself in Matt. v. 13 and has already been considered. Salt, as we then saw, is always used in the Bible with reference to its taste and especially to its power to impart taste, so that its figurative use suggests the zest and interest of life and the sense of life's values. To have salt in ourselves is not to depend upon the voice of others for what shall give our life its interest and worth, but to find life's value in our own taste of it and in what we can impart to life. Peace is kept, not by an exact balance of rights, but by the outgoings of

a goodwill that finds its joy and dignity, not in what it can demand, but in what it enjoys and contributes.

An aspect of the same truth, though given in almost opposite figure, is found in Mark iv. 25 (with its parallels Matt. xiii. 12 and Luke viii. 18) and also in Q (Matt. xxv. 29, Luke xix. 26) where it has been appended to the parable of the pounds. Mark's version is:—

25 For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.

The point seems to be in the difference between intensity and quantity of possession. "He that hath" is the man with power of appropriation—what he has becomes part of himself, growing with his growth and maintaining its vitality by laying hold of what feeds it. And whether we speak of money, or knowledge, or goodness, it is true that to the man who in this sense has, to him shall be given. Whereas any having that is not inwardly appropriated is but loosely held and likely to be lost.

This same invasive power possessed by the central interest of a personality finds expression in another saying, "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and the evil man out of his evil treasure bringeth forth that which is evil" (Luke vi. 45, Matt. xii. 35). It is what a man really values that gives quality to his

acts. If we may take it in the context in which it appears in both Matthew and Luke, as following the saying, " The tree is known by its fruits," we have a further implication—what a man produces shows the man, whether good or bad; but what a man treasures in his heart shows itself in what he produces, whether good or bad; so that the good man is he who loves the good: the measure of a man's appreciation is the measure of the man, as more than one wise man has since repeated.

Here also we must take the saying, " Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod " (Mark viii. 15). The power of an act to evoke in others the spirit from which it proceeded is not cancelled by the opposition of the two parties. The leaven of evil operates not only through companionship with the evil. The evil in our opponents always tempts us to evil of like kind: we are apt to answer with the same unlawful weapons. This saying, coming at a moment when Galilee had been closed to him by the opposition (and probably by collaboration of the Pharisees and Herod, as in Mark iii. 6) suggests that even Jesus felt the temptation.

We come now to a group of short parables and parabolic sayings which take us to the heart of the problems and needs of personality. We shall first

consider the parable of the rich fool (Luke xii. 16-21):

15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. 16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: 17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? 18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry. 20 But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then those things which thou hast provided whose shall they be? 21 So *is* he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

The enigmatic saying which precedes the parable may be literally translated, "Not in one's superfluity is his life from his possessions," which seems to mean that though a man cannot live a man's life without certain possessions, this is not true of superfluities, which rather impede than help life's fulness. It may have been spoken at the same time as the parable, but they do not seem intended to illustrate each other.

Verse 21 is omitted by Codex D and the two oldest Latin codexes, so that it may be no part of Luke's original text, but even if it is, it should probably be regarded as an editorial comment rather than an utterance of Jesus. It expresses a favourite idea of Luke's and takes attention from the question in which the parable culminates, "Then whose shall those things be?"

The parable of the rich fool is not strictly a parable: the meaning comes to the surface of the story in God's epithet, demand and question. It is the *reductio ad absurdum* of selfishness by showing it at work systematically and unencumbered. Self-love values things above persons, and values persons only by seeking to degrade them into things. Systematic self-love is thus characteristically occupied in laying up things for its own safety, comfort, indulgence and glory; and in order that these things may be the greater and more lasting, the enjoyment of them is continually postponed—"I will pull down my barns, and build greater"—with the result that the man never enjoys them at all. In the meantime his exclusive self-concern leaves him without those to whom he is glad to bequeath his amassed means. The result of his systematic selfishness is that all his life has been not enjoyment but toil, and that all the results of his toil will be enjoyed by those for whom he cares nothing.

The common tendency of the selfish man to seek wealth that he may find satisfaction, but never to be satisfied that he has enough, is described in a saying which Moslem tradition attributes to Jesus, "Whoso craves wealth is like a man who drinks sea-water: the more he drinks, the more he increases his thirst, and he ceases not to drink until he perishes."

There is probably an intended contrast between "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years," and "This night shall they ask back thy soul from thee." The soul had secured possession of all things but itself: it was borrowed and the loan is now called in.

Beside the lonely futility of the selfishness depicted in this parable we may set its opposite—the creation of fellowship by self-giving, as embodied in the saying, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John xii. 24).

The saying that the lamp of the body is the eye is found in both Matthew (vi. 22 f.) and Luke (xi. 34-36), but the extraordinary redundances in the Lucan version leave little doubt that we should prefer Matthew's:—

22 The lamp of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of

light. 23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great *is* that darkness !

The point of this saying is that the light of the body is the light which it turns on things other than itself. Our limbs are not guided by looking at them, but by looking away from them at the object of our interest or activity. So also when I can look without prejudice on another then I know myself. The play upon the " evil eye " warns that a malign regard betrays inward darkness, and so suggests that the unbiassed contemplation of others, which is the guarantee of inward light, cannot exist without love. " He that loveth his brother abideth in the light " (1 John ii. 10).

The fundamental unity of personality is asserted in a saying given in Luke xvi. 13 and Matt. vi. 24, the latter as follows:—

24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

The alternative is noteworthy, God and Mammon, not the Spirit and the flesh, etc. Wealth is the most humanized, socialized form of the material, and therefore the most potent. It has the ear of the appetites, of vanity, of pride. More than anything

else it offers a base for consolidating a system of life apart from spiritual values, and is therefore, for most men, the alternative to the service of God. We are owned either by the material or spiritual, are servants either of God or Mammon.

It will be remembered that in the story of the rich ruler, after he had gone away sorrowful, Jesus said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" and then met his disciples' surprise by adding, "With men it is impossible, but not with God: for all things are possible with God," which is a shirking of the issue, unless it means that nothing but religion can save a man from slavery to wealth.

Luke (ix. 61, 62) preserves an incident showing the unity of personality in practice:—

61 And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house. 62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Why should the man with his hand on the plough not look back? It is not expected that the ploughman should have no interest in life but ploughing. He does not have to choose between ploughing and other interests, but is expected to see that all other

worthy interests should make him, for their sake, concentrate on this that he is at. The would-be follower was wrong in seeing a conflict between the following of Jesus and the fellowship of the home. He who cannot see that all human fellowships need the fellowship of the kingdom of God is not fit for its service.

We may contrast this with the immediately preceding saying (also given in Matt. viii. 21 f.):—

59 And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. 60 But he said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

A convention, no matter how sacred, which does not serve life, is unhesitatingly relegated to those who do not know life's truth, that the man who does may be free to serve the truth he knows. So over against concentration by inclusion we have its necessary counterpart, concentration by exclusion: both have their place in the demands of the kingdom of God.

In connection with the unity of personality we are inclined, as we contemplate the character of Jesus, to think that its union of opposite qualities came to him without conscious effort. There is an intimation that this was not so in the saying with which he sent

the disciples out, " Be ye wise as serpents and harmless (or rather " sincere " or " simple ") as doves " (Matt. x. 16). The work to which he and they were committed called for the union of qualities as inimical to each other as the serpent to the dove. For the man who can make efficient or brilliant use of means to practical ends is always under temptation to outwit his opponents in ways that warp his honesty. And the man who is conscious of complete honesty of purpose is often tempted to ignore the necessity of tact and intellectual effort in the choice and use of his means. The parables themselves often give evidence that Jesus used an extraordinary astuteness, but, rightly considered, this would enhance rather than diminish our appreciation of his simplicity and honesty, and would mark them, not as an effortless heritage, but as dearly maintained achievements.

A question of personality is touched by the enigmatic words, " Every one shall be salted with fire " (Mark ix. 49).[1] The brevity of this saying and the many-sidedness of the figures used will make its significance quite indeterminate unless we confine ourselves to Jesus' known use of the terms. So

[1] The context does not help us here. It is generally now recognized that in Mark ix. 42-50, we have a series of originally independent sayings linked together by the mnemonic words "stumble," "fire," " salt."

far as the figures themselves are concerned, salt, in his utterances, connotes taste and the power to give taste; "salted" therefore is that which has been given taste. So that the saying maintains the figure: "salted with fire" is that which has been given savour by roasting instead of by salt.

And salt stands for that which gives taste to life, i.e., interest, sense of value. "Fire" in the sayings of Jesus is sometimes the fire of Gehenna, but in that case is always specially qualified by additional words; and that sense would hardly be applicable to "every one." Otherwise he uses "fire" as a figure of opposition and conflict, as in "I came to cast fire upon the earth; and what will I, if it is already kindled?" (Luke xii. 49) and in the apocryphal saying, "He that is near me is near the fire: he that is far from me is far from the kingdom" or "from life," as another version has it.[1] Understanding the figures in this way, we find that "Every one shalt be salted with fire" expresses in its own way and for its own ends the conclusion of recent psychology that self-consciousness with its interests and values arose from conflict and is maintained by it. It reminds us that through the pain of conflict we enter into and appropriate life's values, and that

[1] The first form is preserved by Origen and Didymus, the second is from a tract, "Perfection according to the Saviour," appended to an Armenian version of Ephraim's commentary on the Diatessaron of Tatian and attributed by Rendel Harris to the latter writer.

to shun the battle is to condemn life to pettiness and dulness.

To the saying just considered many ancient authorities add, "And every sacrifice shall be salted with salt," which, carrying on the significance of salt from the last sentence to the Levitical practice (Lev. ii. 13) of adding salt to certain offerings, declares that whatever we give to God must have its own savour or value. Mere sacrifice in itself is useless: what God wants of us are the deeds that have their own value in his world. "If I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing."

But this impinges upon the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER XI

PARABLES OF GOD AND MAN

We pass now finally to the parables setting forth God's way with men, and we shall take first the parable of the unmerciful servant (Matt. xviii. 23-25):

21 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? 22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. 23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. 24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents. 25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. 26 The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. 27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. 28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him,

and took *him* by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. 29 And his fellow-servant fell down, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. 30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. 31 So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. 32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: 33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? 34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors till he should pay all that was due. 35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

This parable is a vindication in particular of one of the most recurrent principles of Jesus' teaching—that what God can be to us is limited by what we are trying to be to our fellows: "Judge not, that ye be not judged," "Give and it shall be given unto you," "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you again."

The big debtor had not troubled about the little debt due to him, knowing that whatever came to him belonged to his creditor, but when his debt was

forgiven, whatever he could squeeze out of the little debtor became his own. The forgiveness which he had received, not moving his spirit in like kind, became a positive incentive in the opposite direction. And the king, who had freely pardoned him before he showed his unworthiness, must now cancel his pardon not only because he had proved unworthy of it, but because there was no other way of protecting the small debtor. So if we could believe that God forgave us, while we were unwilling to forgive those who sin against us, it would, by reinforcing our self-valuation, make us more exacting towards our fellows, and would then make the divine mercy shown to us a corroboration of our harshness to them.

Another aspect of the same law of our spiritual life is given in the parable of the Pharisee and publican (Luke xviii. 9-14):—

9 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: 10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank thee that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. 12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I get. 13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying,

God be merciful to me a sinner. 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

The Pharisee's contempt for his fellow-man makes his own soul impervious to God. His prayer is not the refreshing of his soul by the reception of God's goodness: instead, he offers God an advertisement of his own excellence. The publican knows himself too well to despise others, and therefore upon his penitently bowed head God can place the hand of forgiveness. He, and not the other (for so we should probably understand it), went back to his house at peace with God and with God's power for betterment at work in him.

Here too we find the significance of the parable upon which Jesus put such stress in his controversy with the scribes and Pharisees over ritual defilement (Mark vii. 1-23), the latter part of which is as follows:

14 And when he had called all the people *unto him* again, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one *of you*, and understand: 15 There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. 17 And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable.

18 And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, *it* cannot defile him; 19 Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught? making all meats clean. 20 And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, 22 Covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: 23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

To the Jew defilement was that which unfitted a man for God's presence and inhibited his fellowship with God. And Jesus here says that nothing robs us of fellowship with God but the wrong use of our own initiative. The explanation of the parable in vv. 17-23, whether authentic or not, is in full accord with the spirit of Jesus' teaching, in specifying chiefly sins against our fellows as exemplifying those wrong outgoings of human initiative that separate a man from God.

And clearly if man is to have fellowship with God, he must honour and love what God honours and loves. The impossibility of any other conclusion is the argument of the parable of the wedding gar-

ment which, as we saw, Matthew has woven into his version of the parable of the supper. By itself it probably originally ran somewhat as follows (Matt. xxii. 2, 11-13a):—

2 The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage feast for his son. 11 And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: 12 And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. 13 Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and cast *him* into outer darkness.

The common assertion that a wedding garment was supplied by the host lacks support. Had it been offered in this case, we should have a different question from the king. The man must then have come in without one, and the king would want to know why the wedding garment he provided had not been used. We should therefore take it that the man came without troubling to be clad as courtesy and the occasion demanded. He has not cared to have fellowship with the desire and intent of the king's heart—to honour his son—and therefore his seeking of fellowship on the lower level of eating and drinking is an insult. So Jesus suggests that it is not enough for man to sit and feed at the banquet of life: he must enter into the purpose and heart of

the Lord of the banquet, or life will go out into hunger and darkness.

It is significant that in reply to the king's question the man is speechless: there is no such self-defence as there was with the slothful servant in the parable of the pounds: there is no appeal for mercy. It is the picture of the man who ignores spiritual values—part of this attitude is that its implications have never been thought out—so that when he is confronted with them, he is "speechless," reduced to the dumb brute, renouncing human fellowship and intelligent life. Jesus' charge against this practical materialism, this unphilosophical epicureanism, is its unmannerly stupidity.

The parable of the unprofitable slaves (Luke xvii. 7-10) is evidently directed against a wrong idea of God:—

7 But which of you having a slave plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? 8 And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? 9 Doth he thank that slave because he did the things that were commanded him? 10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say,

We are unprofitable slaves: we have done that which was our duty to do.

The Sinaitic Syriac version omits " unprofitable " and many modern scholars therefore regard it as an early gloss. But it may also be argued that it was omitted because it was difficult to think that those who had " done all " were unprofitable. And if we omit " unprofitable " there seems no reason for the clause that follows, " we have done what we were obliged to do," which explains why they were to be considered unprofitable, but hardly why they were to be considered slaves. And the omission of the adjective disregards a point specially emphasized in the parable—that it speaks only and expressly of things commanded, and excludes from its purview any spontaneous or uncommanded service. The point is that when they had done all that was commanded, they had done no more than the unpunishable minimum: they were unprofitable servants.

This strict limitation of the relation to what is commanded goes with other characteristics of the parable. Luke, by his placing, suggests that it was spoken specially to the disciples; but this is improbable: the disciples were not a slave-owning class, and the discourteous lordliness that owes no thanks to a slave is the opposite of the conduct which Jesus expected from his followers. This sort of conduct in the man who in the parable stands for God

suggests that Jesus is here arguing from premises other than his own, and from an idea of God very like the slothful servant's idea of his master in the parable of the pounds and the elder brother's idea of his father in the parable of the prodigal. The close of the parable contains a similar departure from Jesus' own thought. "We are unprofitable servants" is at all points the opposite of "Your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the Most High" (Luke vi. 35, 23, Matt. v. 43-48, 12).

In this parable, Jesus seems to be using the method employed in the parable of the rich fool. There a wrong view of life was, by the elimination of the unessential, shown to reduce itself to absurdity: here the same thing is done for a wrong idea of God. Three things stand out in the parable: it is aimed against self-righteousness and a sense of merit: it concerns a relationship limited to that of command: this relationship of command is based upon ownership, depicted in its essence as unrelieved slavery. We know that Jesus found self-righteousness to be a besetting sin of his people, and that amongst them the idea of merit was dearly cherished. Their merit was the merit of fulfilling the Law, the possession of which they valued as indicating that they, beyond other peoples, belonged to God: they were his servants, his possession. In the parable, by confining himself to the essentials, Jesus shows

that a relationship of command based on ownership has no place for merit.

The parable thus becomes a defence of Jesus' emphasis upon the figure of the father and child for the relationship of God to man. It hints that the only alternative to this is that of ownership; man is either akin to God, or else he is merely God's property. But when man thinks of himself merely as God's property, the continual emergence of desire for merit (which contradicts the situation) is evidence that this thought of God has no wholesome room for man's self-regard, and reduces it to an absurd self-righteousness. By pushing the idea of God's ownership and command to its logical conclusion, Jesus shows that it does not allow personality to find its dignity in duty. The parable leaves us with the conclusion that in their position these men have no right to expect thanks, but that it is not right for any man to be put into the position in which they are; which is what Jesus intended, if our understanding of the parable is correct. Only if we are children of God can our self-regard and desire for merit find their sublimation in the dignity and joy of divine fellowship.

The saying, "A servant is not above (or greater than) his lord," should probably find its significance within the range of figures and interests of the parable just considered.

It seems to afford only two possibilities of interpretation. One is that the lord stands for Jesus and the servant for the disciple. So two of the evangelists seem to have understood it, but the applications of it in this sense, though various, are not happy. We have considered (p. 77 ff.) the use made of it in Matt. x. 24 f. To what was there noted we may add that Matthew's arrangement results in the strange argument that because it is enough for the slave to be as his lord therefore he may expect much more abuse. And Matthew's application is hardly true to fact; for in any unpopular religious movement the leaders may always expect more abuse than the rank and file. In the Fourth Gospel, the saying appears twice. In xiii. 16 it enjoins the disciples to follow the example of their Lord and Master who had washed their feet; but in such connection the saying would cut both ways, for that a servant is not greater than his lord would be as much against as for such an act. It is evident also that the act in question was not done as an example, as appears in the words, "If I wash thee not thou hast no part with me," so that the application of the saying which implies that it was so done can hardly be authentic. And this conclusion reflects on the reference made to it in John xv. 20, "Remember the word that I said unto you, A servant is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept

my word, they will keep yours also." And again the application is hardly true to fact, for, on the one hand, as we have just seen, a religious leader is always much more likely to be persecuted than his followers, while on the other hand, it does not follow that if we accept the master's word, we necessarily accept the servant's also.

The unfortunate use of this repeated citation suggests that here we have a genuine word of Jesus mistakenly applied, and the only alternative to the application of it to Jesus and his disciples is to take it as intended to speak of God and man. And so taken, this otherwise obvious saying becomes suggestive. For when we contemplate, especially as it appears in the history of Hebrew religion, what men have done and suffered in loyalty to God, we cannot help seeing that they shew in their heroism and self-sacrifice a moral quality loftier than that which they attribute to God. And Jesus, in reminding us that "a servant is not above his lord," tells us that God is to man all and more than man is to God: "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but One—God." But if this is so, then the figure of lord and servant becomes inadequate and must be replaced by that of father and child.

Chief among the parables of God and man is the parable of the prodigal son. We have already had

to consider it (p. 120 ff) in view of its importance as a parable of conflict. As an indication of, and argument for, Jesus' thought of God, its beauty and power are that it speaks for itself. We need note only two singular features. The turning point of the prodigal's life is described as " when he came to himself " and finds expression in his words, " I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight " (note the order), as though, in Jesus' thought, the achievement of true personality was concomitant with a resolute sensitiveness to the divine.

We should probably include here the parable of the housebreaker, which is given, with an interpretation, in Matt. xxiv. 43, 44 and Luke xii. 39, 40, the latter being as follows:—

39 And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. 40 Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

It is impossible to take this application as authentic, for in it the disciples are told that, because under certain circumstances the goodman of the house could not watch, they, being in like circumstances, ought to watch. The parable cuts the ground

from its application. We note too that he "cometh at an hour when ye think not," is very like the expression in the parable that follows (Luke xii. 46, Matt. xxiv. 50) "will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware," where it is intelligible, but here it amounts to "Be prepared, for the Son of man will come when you are unprepared." And we note, "Be ye *also* ready," though the point is that the goodman could not be ready.

It appears then that we cannot look to this application to give us any light on the meaning of the parable, nor does the context help, for, as we have seen (p. 191), its present position does not seem to give its original occasion.

Taken by itself, the argument of the parable is clear enough. It shows that when steps are not taken to prevent an evil, the evil has not been foreseen as a specific and concrete event of the future, though of course its general possibility may have been recognized. Only an accomplice knows when the thief will come: perfect foreknowledge of evil implies complicity.

This sense is borne out by the saying, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matt. vi. 34), which Matthew has appended to a discourse that appears without it in Luke; and since the gist of this discourse is that the good of the day will be sufficient,

the saying does not seem to be in its original setting. Applied to material evils, it is too pessimistic and cynical for Jesus; we need, however, to be told that it is wrong to anticipate moral evil in others—and wrong on two grounds: the voluntary element in all moral evil makes it unpredictable, and to expect moral evil is always to contribute to it.

But if we take the parable of the housebreaker to be intended to show that unprevented evil is partly at least unforeseen, to whom is it intended that this should apply? Clearly to someone about whom it would commonly be thought otherwise. So that it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Jesus is here speaking of the divine providence. Nor would occasion be lacking. When Galilee, still unrepentant, was closed to his endeavour, or when, later, it became evident that at least a large part of the nation would reject him, the question must have arisen, How can God be trustworthy, who sent you to proclaim that his kingdom was at hand, if he did not see that the people would reject you; or if he foresaw their refusal, what was the sense of the proclamation? The parable would give the answer—that moral evil can be completely foreseen only by those who will it. It is difficult to see how, with God, as with man, concrete moral evil can be exactly foreseen unless it is predetermined. And that Jesus did not attribute this sort of predetermination to God appears in the

saying, " It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish " (Matt. xviii. 14), for the saying implies that there was a danger that this might happen. It may perhaps be said that such conceptions could not have been held by a Jew of that day, but it must be remembered that thought was then almost as free as conduct was bound. We have seen, too, that the ordinary Jewish ideas of God's prescience and predetermination led in the early Church to such distortions of history as the statement that Jesus spoke in parables in order not to be understood: such ideas always tend to the distortion of history, and so could hardly have commended themselves to Jesus. And though it is not a base for conclusive argument, it may be noted that there is hardly a figure under which Jesus speaks of God that does not become the less applicable the more we emphasize God's complete prescience of evil: it is so with the host who sends out to say, The supper is now ready—with the king who had to cancel his pardon—with the farmer who gives the fig tree another chance. And the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the prodigal, leave us with the impression that the joy of recovery would be lost to him who could surely and exactly foresee the end of evil.

It is to two of the three parables last named

that we must now turn. Luke prefaces the parable of the prodigal with that of the lost coin (Luke xv. 8-10):—

8 Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a lamp, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find *it*? 9 And when she hath found *it*, she calleth *her* friends and *her* neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. 10 Even so, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

The occasion of this parable, as also that of the prodigal, was the scribes and Pharisees' complaint of Jesus' fellowship with publicans and sinners; and it is characteristic that, though in the elder brother of the prodigal Jesus returns the criticism of his critics, he first defends his action by a simple appeal to the heart of God. Verse 10, which, in Hebrew phrase, tells us that God himself rejoices "over one sinner that repenteth" affirms the intimacy of the heart of God with the movements of human life. We set this statement beside, "Not one of them falleth on the ground without your Father" (Matt. x. 29), and see that both would lose much of their meaning unless God is more deeply involved in the joyful and tragic changes of life than the perfect prescience of theology allows.

The parable of the lost sheep is given by Matt. (xviii. 12-14) as follows:—

12 How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? 13 And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that *sheep*, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. 14 Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

Luke (xv. 4-7) gives it in a different setting, just before the parable of the lost coin, and his form is different:—

4 What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? 5 And when he hath found *it*, he layeth *it* on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together *his* friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. 7 I say unto you that even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

We notice that at almost every point in which Luke differs from Matthew, it is by his assimilation of the parable of the lost sheep to that of the lost

coin with which he places it. This is so with Luke's "lost" instead of Matthew's "astray": and also with Luke's "until he find it," "when he hath found it" "he calleth together his friends, etc.," and also with the first half of v. 7, all of which are without counterpart in Matthew. The gathering of friends is much less suitable to the shepherd story, for the wandering of sheep is a common event. And Luke's closing verse, which looks as though it was composed of the closing verse of the parable of the lost coin with the addition of a sentence that Matthew has in the body of the parable, creates the difficulty of leaving us to guess who they are "which need no repentance." On the other hand the counterpart in Matthew is intelligible and natural: the shepherd, when he finds the sheep, "rejoiceth more of that sheep than of the ninety and nine that went not astray." Luke's application, though it stresses the joy, quite ignores the seeking, which is as important an element of the story; and by placing this parable before that of the lost coin, he produces an anti-climax, for the coin does not suffer, nor is the search for it as arduous. There can therefore be very little doubt that both in form and setting we should prefer Matthew's version.

In Matthew the parable is in a setting that deals with the value of human personality. The "little ones" are most probably the common people, so

that it is the value of man in the broadest sense that is in question. And the parable deals with this question of man's value in view of the most unlovely thing in him, his sin. What is man, the one sinner in God's world, to God? The parable answers: the shepherd leaves the unstraying and goes after the wanderer, "and if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine that went not astray." At once there come to our mind the sayings, "Ye are of more value than many sparrows," "How much then is man of more value than a sheep!" and we conclude that Jesus is not comparing flagrant sinners with very hypothetical righteous, but is depicting mankind as a whole, the one straying and sinful being in all God's world, who is yet dearer to him than others, and over whose retrieval he rejoices more than over the blameless beauties and joys of life not capable of sin.[1]

We conclude our survey of the parables with two semi-parables giving two aspects of the verdict of God upon men. The first is found both in Matthew and Luke, and each version has its own difficulties. If we compare Luke xiii. 24-27:—

23 Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few

[1] Dr. A. Plummer, St. Luke's Gospel, I.C.C., p. 368, notes that Cyril of Alexandria and Ambrose regard the straying sheep as representing the human race and the ninety and nine as the angels.

that be saved ? And he said unto them, 24 Strive to enter in at the narrow door: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. 25 When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: 26 Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. 27 But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all *ye* workers of iniquity,

with Matt. vii. 13, 14 and 21-23:—

13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way that leadeth to destruction and many there be which go in thereat: 14 Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. 21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name ? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many mighty works ? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity,

we can hardly avoid concluding that we have variant versions of the same original. And there can be little doubt that Luke's version is the more authentic. To Luke's door Matthew adds the commonplace figure of the Two Ways, found also in the Didache, which according to Canon Streeter was, like Matthew, a product of the Syrian Church.[1] This blurs the figure, for a narrow gate will not be harder to enter than a broad one, unless a crowd is seeking it, and it is in no case appreciably harder to find. And Matthew's definite assertion that few would be saved is foreign to the spirit of Jesus and is contradicted by, "I say unto you that many shall come . . ." (Matt. viii. 11). We get the same result if we compare Matt. vii. 22, 23 with Mark ix. 39 "Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a mighty work in my name, and be able quickly to speak evil of me." These two sayings are hardly compatible with each other, and we cannot doubt that Mark is here nearer to the thought of Jesus.

But although we must in general prefer Luke's version, it has its own difficulties. The last part of the late applicants' plea, "Thou hast taught in our streets," implies that "the master of the house" is Jesus; but, if so, then those who could say, "We have eaten and drunk in thy presence" would be only a small number, including principally the

[1] *The Four Gospels*, p. 500: *The Primitive Church*, p. 281.

twelve and others whom we cannot think of as excluded. And in oriental thought, "Thou hast taught in our streets" would be no ground for claim, whereas "We have eaten and drunk in thy presence" would. Probably therefore, the former is an addition to the original words by someone who took "the master of the house" to be Jesus, whereas there is little doubt that any audience to which he may have spoken would understand him to be speaking of God and not of himself; and the claim, "We have eaten and drunk in thy presence" would be understood as referring to sacrificial meals. It should be noted here that this is not strictly speaking a parable but rather (like Luke xii. 35 ff.) an elaborated metaphor bordering on allegory, in which the important thing is to depict rather than to prove. The consistency of the picture is strained, as when the master of the house speaks, not in that rôle, but as judge of human destiny. The recognition of this will assist in another difficulty.

Verse 24 is apt to suggest a great crowd struggling before a narrow door where only the strongest are able to force a way in. Verses 25 ff., however, suggest that those who were excluded made no serious attempt to enter in time: they do not defend themselves on the plea that they tried and were not strong enough. But a closer examination modifies this discrepancy. For obviously those of v. 24

who " will seek to enter in, and shall not be able " are those of v. 25 who come after the door is shut and then meet with refusal; so that " strive ye to enter in at the narrow door " is not intended to enjoin competition with others struggling to enter, but determination to enter at all costs before the door is shut. In this case we have to take the word " narrow " not as part of the picture but (like the sentence passed by the master of the house) as finding its warrant only in what the picture signifies, i.e., the apparently humble appearance of the great opportunity.

But however difficult the details of this passage, the general meaning is fairly clear. " Are there few that be saved ? " is the question of one who thinks himself of their number, and wants to know how exclusive the privilege is. Jesus' reply is that consciousness of privilege is only too likely to blind a man to the necessity of the intensest concentration of endeavour, so that he misses life's opportunity. The very privilege that brings the opportunity makes the missing of it the more culpable. To know and not to have striven is to be estranged from God and to be a " worker of iniquity."

The other semi-parable of judgment (Matt. xxv. 31-46) also seems to have had its figures partly obscured by editorial modifications:—

31 But when the Son of man shall come in his

glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: 32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats: 33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. 37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed *thee*? or thirsty, and gave *thee* drink? 38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took *thee* in? or naked, and clothed *thee*? 39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me. 41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: 43 I was a stranger and ye took me not in: naked,

and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. 44 Then shall they also answer saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? 45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did *it* not to one of the least of these, ye did *it* not to me. 46 And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

As the passage stands, it rouses the question, Who are "my brethren"? They are evidently distinguished from the "blessed of my Father" no less than from the "cursed," so that they are not amongst those who come up for judgment. And yet the judgment is inclusive: "before him shall be gathered all nations." It is possible, of course, to translate "nations" by the common alternative "Gentiles," which would imply that "my brethren" were the Jews. But could Jesus have thought that the criterion of judgment for the Gentiles was the way they had treated the Jews? And we note that, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, precisely the same criterion is applied to the Jew as is in force here: the rich man "did it not unto one of these least." And whether "my brethren" were the Jews or the Christians, only a certain portion of the world's population past and present has had the chance of helping a needy Jew or Christian.

These difficulties of significance are connected with certain anomalies of form. In the body of the parable the judge is called "the King," but in the first verse of it, and in that only, he is "the Son of man"; moreover this verse seems to be a quotation from the Similitudes of Enoch, the influence of which appears to be seen also in "prepared for the devil and his angels."[1] We note that though v. 34 has "blessed of my Father," v. 41 has simply "cursed" (not "of my Father"); and though v. 40 has "one of the least of these my brethren," v. 45 has simply "one of the least of these." "Blessed of my Father," too, would be more fitting from the King's son than from the King himself. This all suggests that originally the parable had the King as the judge throughout and was without the terms "my brethren" and "of my Father." In that case, the King stands for God, as in Jesus' phrase, "the city of the Great King" (Matt. v. 35), and as would naturally be understood by any Jewish audience; and when we consider such sayings as, "Whosoever shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me; and whosoever

[1] Similitudes of Enoch, lxii. 5, "When they see that Son of Man sitting on the throne of his glory": lxix. 27, "And he (that Son of Man) sat on the throne of his glory." "The angels of the devil" is is a strange term on the lips of Jesus, but Enoch has much to say of evil angels and tells of "a deep valley with burning fire" prepared for them (liv). A comparison of Matt. xix. 28 with Luke xxii. 28f. will confirm the suggestion that Matt. xxv. 31 shows the influence of Enoch.

receiveth me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me" (Mark ix. 37) and, "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me" (Matt. x. 40: cf. Luke x. 16), they suggest that, in describing the final outcome of conduct, Jesus would think of God rather than of himself as saying, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these least, ye did it unto me." In this case, "one of these least" would be any of the world's distressed or needy. The parable has evidently been modified under a tendency which Matthew shows elsewhere (cf. his modification of Mark viii. 38 in Matt. xvi. 27, and of Mark v. 7 in Matt. viii. 29 by adding "before the time") of regarding Jesus as the judge of the last judgment.

So that there we have God's judgment upon men, given in the terms of what we have seen to be one of the most frequently reiterated principles of Jesus' teaching—that what we endeavour to be to our fellows determines what God can be to us.

This parable of Matthew's is separated from the parable of the ten virgins by that of the talents, which Luke gives in another connection and which Matthew places here under an unwarranted interpretation of its meaning. And the latter part of the parable of the ten virgins consists of a passage (Matt. xxv. 11, 12, vide p. 70) which appears originally to have belonged to the picture of judgment in

Luke xiii (i.e., vv. 25-27), so that there is some possibility that originally these two pictures of judgment—Luke's semi-parable of the narrow door and Matthew's semi-parable of the sheep and goats —stood alongside each other. They are complementary in their contents. In the one, those who are judged claim acquaintance with the judge, " We did eat and drink in thy presence," and the judge repudiates the claim, " I tell you, I know not whence ye are." In the other the judge claims acquaintance with the judged, and is answered in astonishment, " When saw we thee . . . ? " If the two parables stood together in Q, Luke, not finding in the parable of the sheep and goats any mention of the gospel to the Gentiles, would be inclined to omit it. He apparently did so, replacing it by a saying (Luke. xiii. 28, 29) that " they shall come from the east and west, and from the north and south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God," nothing being said of the criterion of admission.

Jesus' answer to the question, Lord, are they few that be saved ? (Luke xiii. 23 ff.) concerned only these who might claim a privilege in the knowledge of God. But this would leave the account of judgment incomplete; and in saying nothing of the unprivileged, he had not said all that ought to be said of the privileged. Though those who were privileged with true knowledge of God must undergo a pecu-

liar test, there is a wider test to which all must submit for we should apparently take " all the nations " o Matt. xxv. 31 in its most inclusive sense.

The two pictures give two essential aspects o judgment upon life. For the man who has heard th divine invitation and knows life's opportunity o fellowship with God, there is the test of humilit and focussed endeavour—the narrow door. Fo the rest there is the test of compassion: are yo open to those calls that witness that life is larger tha your private pains and pleasures ? The qualitie tested are in some sense opposite: kind-heartednes and intensity of will, the charity of the simple an the rigorous concentration of the saint. Yet bot are needed. The motions of compassion are th beginning of spiritual discernment. Then, too, th spontaneity of charity keeps concentration whol some, while a concentrated order of thought an will is needed to make compassion effective; an the consummation of knowledge and duty is love.[1]

[1] I am indebted to the editors of *The Expository Times* fo permission to use here material from my paper on " The Parable o the Sheep and the Goats."

APPENDIX ON JESUS' USE OF THE ABSURD[1]

CERTAIN of the sayings of Jesus are marked by what can only be called obvious absurdities. When Jesus bade the critic consider the beam in his own eye before he offered to take the mote from his brother's eye: when he accused the Pharisees of straining out the gnat and swallowing the camel: when he said that it was easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God: when he told his disciples that if they had faith as a grain of mustard seed they would be able to command the sycamine tree to be rooted up and planted in the sea and it would obey them; in all these cases his figures are undeniably absurd. So much has this been felt that attempts have been made to mitigate them, but in vain. Despite the best endeavours of exegetes the beam remains a beam, the camel refuses to be reduced to a cable and the needle's eye to be enlarged to a wicket-gate. The author of the First Gospel seems to join in this

[1] The contents of this appendix appeared as an article in *The Congregational Quarterly* of October, 1928. I am indebted to the editor for permission to make use of it, as also of material used elsewhere in this book from my article on "The Interpreted Parables" in the issue of October, 1925.

attempt. Instead of the strange and difficult figure of the transplanted sycamine given by Luke (xvii. 6), he has the commonly used and easier phrase about removing mountains (xvii. 20), thereby convincing all students that Luke's version is the more original.

If we cannot explain these absurdities away, we must try to understand their use. Absurdities of figure may, of course, occur because the imagination is not fully alive to what the lips are uttering. But it would be difficult to find any poet whose words tell us more surely than do those of Jesus that he sees what he says. Jesus nearly always spoke in pictures. It is characteristic that when he speaks of the result of his work in the cities of Galilee, the cities themselves rise before him and he speaks to them, " Chorazin ! . . . Bethsaida ! . . . and thou, Capernaum ! . . . "

But a speaker may be well aware of the absurdities he utters. This is sometimes, as in the case of many Irish bulls, when he subordinates other intents of speech to the desire to be facetious. If we cannot attribute such a motive as this to Jesus it would seem that only one other possibility remains. Absurdity of figure is the natural expression for that which strikes the speaker as being in itself absurd. We have an example of this in King John (Act II, Sc. i), where Faulconbridge comments upon the First Citizen's gasconade:

" Here's a large mouth, indeed,
That spits forth death and mountains, rocks and seas,"

and we see at once that the aptness and force of the figure lies in its very absurdity. And if we apply this suggestion to the absurdities in the sayings of Jesus, it is obviously true of some of them at least.

Thus the absurd form of the question, " Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye ? " reminds us that we not only see others' faults more readily than our own, but that this tendency commonly goes to an absurd length. The proverbial description of this bias has a similar element of absurdity—" It is the pot calling the kettle black."

So also when Jesus spoke of straining out the gnat and swallowing the camel he was using absurd terms to describe one of humanity's perennial absurdities, perennial too in the fact that, now as then, convention does not see the joke. For even to-day we have not to look far for religious notorieties who are more careful of their pronunciation than of their facts. And we are told that one of the greatest of modern statesmen was much more annoyed at being accused of bad shooting than of perjury.

These instances, and the principle which they illustrate, suggest that when Jesus said, " It is

easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God," his mind was envisaging something rather absurd than impossible. For an impossible figure does not necessarily denote impossibility: no man can swallow a camel, but the Pharisees did what Jesus meant by the figure. And to argue impossibility here from his next words, " With men it is impossible, but not with God," is to imply that God may sometimes be left out of count in things that concern his kingdom. In order to appreciate the force of Jesus' words we need to remember the common Jewish notion that wealth denoted the favour of God, a conviction that lies behind the disciples' fear that if a rich man has little chance, " then who can be saved ? " Jesus sees the absurdity of the idea. The rich man, used to finding in his wealth a key to all doors, stands before the door of the kingdom of God as helplessly absurd as a camel contemplating the passage of a needle's eye.

These considerations may throw some light on Luke's difficult passage about the transplanting of the sycamine tree. Matthew, as we saw, gives a different version, " If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say to this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you." Not only is the figure more sober, but the addition of the last

clause intimates that the whole is to be taken seriously. When, however, we remember that the mustard seed stood for the smallest amount above vanishing point, we are driven to ask, "Are all things possible to the least possible faith?" The question gets more point when we remember that Paul uses the same figure of mountain-moving to express the greatest possible faith—"If I have all faith, so as to remove mountains . . ." and this certainly seems only natural to any one speaking seriously. Here then is another reason for thinking Luke's version more authentic, while the difficulty involved in Matthew's attempt to take the saying seriously suggests that Luke's absurdity of form may be an indication of Jesus' meaning. This suggestion finds support in the setting given by Luke, which gives the saying as the reply of Jesus to the disciples' request, "Increase our faith." Now if we take the reply seriously, it tells the disciples that they have not faith as a grain of mustard seed, i.e., that they have none at all. But we cannot think that Jesus, who found faith in so many others, regarded his disciples as entirely without it. They had even cast out demons in his name. And it is as difficult to think that he would snub them for an innocent request. To this is added the difficulty of thinking that he would depict any achievement useful and desirable for the kingdom of God by the

uprooting of a tree and its being planted in the sea. This saying, so fantastic that it is not likely to have been ascribed to Jesus unless he really uttered it, describes an action so absurd and useless that we cannot think that Jesus intended by it to describe what he would have his followers aspire to. The conclusion, therefore, is that he was describing what he sees to be absurd. If we take his words at their face value he is describing the power to work wonders in the vulgar sense, the thaumaturgy whose use lies not in what it contributes to life, but in its exhibition of the doer's power. We note the words, "It would have obeyed you," with their suggestion rather of the magician's spell than of prayer: they reflect the vein of "Lord, wilt thou that we bid fire come down from heaven and consume them?" We remember also that the Pharisees asked for a sign from heaven. And both pleas could find their justification in the ancient Scriptures. It is probable therefore that the disciples' request for an increase of faith was a request for powers beyond those of exorcism and other cures, for powers to work wonders. And the answer of Jesus is characteristic. He does not deny the possibility of such things, but to him they belong to the babyhood of faith, when it is so little as to be almost nothing—small as a grain of mustard seed: in the issues of his Father's kingdom they were absurd. What the disciples

asked for would be a lessening rather than an increase of faith. On this occasion, as when James and John asked to sit on either side of him in his glory, his answer implies that his disciples were greater than their request.

It seems therefore that the version of Luke shows that Matthew's version involves a misunderstanding of Jesus' meaning. And the same should probably be said of what is apparently yet another version of this saying—Mark xi. 23, "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he saith cometh to pass; he shall have it," for it should be noted that the taking up and casting into the sea look like a reminiscence of the saying as we have it in Luke, the common form as we have it in Matthew and 1 Cor. being merely the removal of the mountain. But if we may conclude that both the Matthæan and Marcan forms are a misunderstanding of Jesus' meaning, it will remove a difficulty from our appreciation of the saneness and wholesomeness of his teaching, for disappointment of expectations based on these two texts has been a very fruitful cause of the collapse of personal religion.

Another difficult utterance may be here considered. After the saying in which the lustful stare is condemned as adultery, Matthew adds, "And if

thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell. And if thy right hand causeth thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee . . . etc." (Matt. v. 29 f.). Mark (ix. 43 ff.) has a similar passage with the addition of a clause about the foot: he places it after the saying about "causing one of these little ones to stumble." This difference of setting indicates that the original occasion of the saying had been lost. Mark places it topically beside another saying about "stumbling": Matthew connects the "stumbling" caused by the eye with the lustful look, and thereby calls attention to an obvious absurdity. How in such a matter could the right eye be guilty and not the left? And how would the excision of one eye lessen the evil so long as the other eye remained? It is, of course, agreed that it would be the greatest folly to take the words literally and act upon them. Origen is said to have done so, and to have regretted it. It is therefore generally taken for granted that by hand and foot and eye, Jesus meant various interests and activities of life, in which case the saying tells us that any interest or activity that brings temptation must at all costs be renounced. But if we admit this principle there seems no reason why we should not apply

it to our members as well as to our interests. And then, too, there is no interest or activity of life without its temptations, so that, thus understood, the saying approximates to Buddhism and goes to justify those who maintain that the ethics of Jesus are the ethics of escape. But this contradicts the abundant and obvious evidence of Jesus' positive attitude to life. "Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you," is the antithesis of Buddhistic renunciation.

And apart from this, the question recurs, "Why the absurd form of the saying?" It is conceivable that a man might think to escape "the lust of eyes" by destroying both of his own: to suggest a compromise by plucking out one is, obviously, to be intentionally absurd. And the absurdity is increased by reiteration, till we have a procession of one-eyed, one-armed, one-legged men entering into "*life*." To be unconscious of these absurdities would argue a slow mind in the speaker, and we have therefore to assume that they were intentional. And if the saying is intentionally absurd, it is difficult to see what it can be but an attack upon the idea, so common in the east, that the flesh is the seat of moral evil. If you really believe the flesh to be the cause of evil, then the less of it the better—the one-eyed, one-armed, one-legged man multiplies his chances for the world to come.

There is evidence that such a theory of evil, though foreign to the genius of Hebrew religion, was to be reckoned with in the time of Jesus. Paul, educated in Jerusalem, finds his chief moral antithesis in the flesh and the spirit, and the very fact that the intensity of his experience and the soundness of his judgment enabled him to avoid the usual conclusion of these premises is evidence that the antithesis was adopted from current thought. One of the features of the life of Palestine in the first century was the Essenes, who abstained from marriage and held the theory that the soul was lured from its ethereal dwelling by sensual love and so became imprisoned in the body. But occasion enough for Jesus' saying may perhaps be found in the sort of Pharisee described in the Babylonian Talmud, who paraded a bruised face as evidence that, when he chanced to meet a woman, he would rather walk with shut eyes than look upon her.

These last two instances are complementary and indicate that to Jesus nature was so near to God that he found something absurd in the idea both of serving the kingdom of God by supernatural marvels and of finding the seat of evil in the natural.

It is remarkable that in the whole of the New Testament outside the first three gospels there is no case of the use of the absurd like these five from the lips of Jesus. This fact goes with the unique art

of the parables to indicate the historicity of a great personality behind the gospel records. And our conception of that personality is enriched, for this use of the absurd—and hence its appropriateness in the speech of Faulconbridge—indicates a free mind, and one in which there is a rare and wholesome combination of the robust and the sensitive. The absence of this usage elsewhere in the New Testament suggests that its spirit was not native to the leaders of the early Church and helps to explain why they took seriously sayings that have so obvious an element of the absurd. And the preservation of this misunderstood element is evidence that our knowledge of what Jesus said is not entirely at the mercy of minds smaller than his own.

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